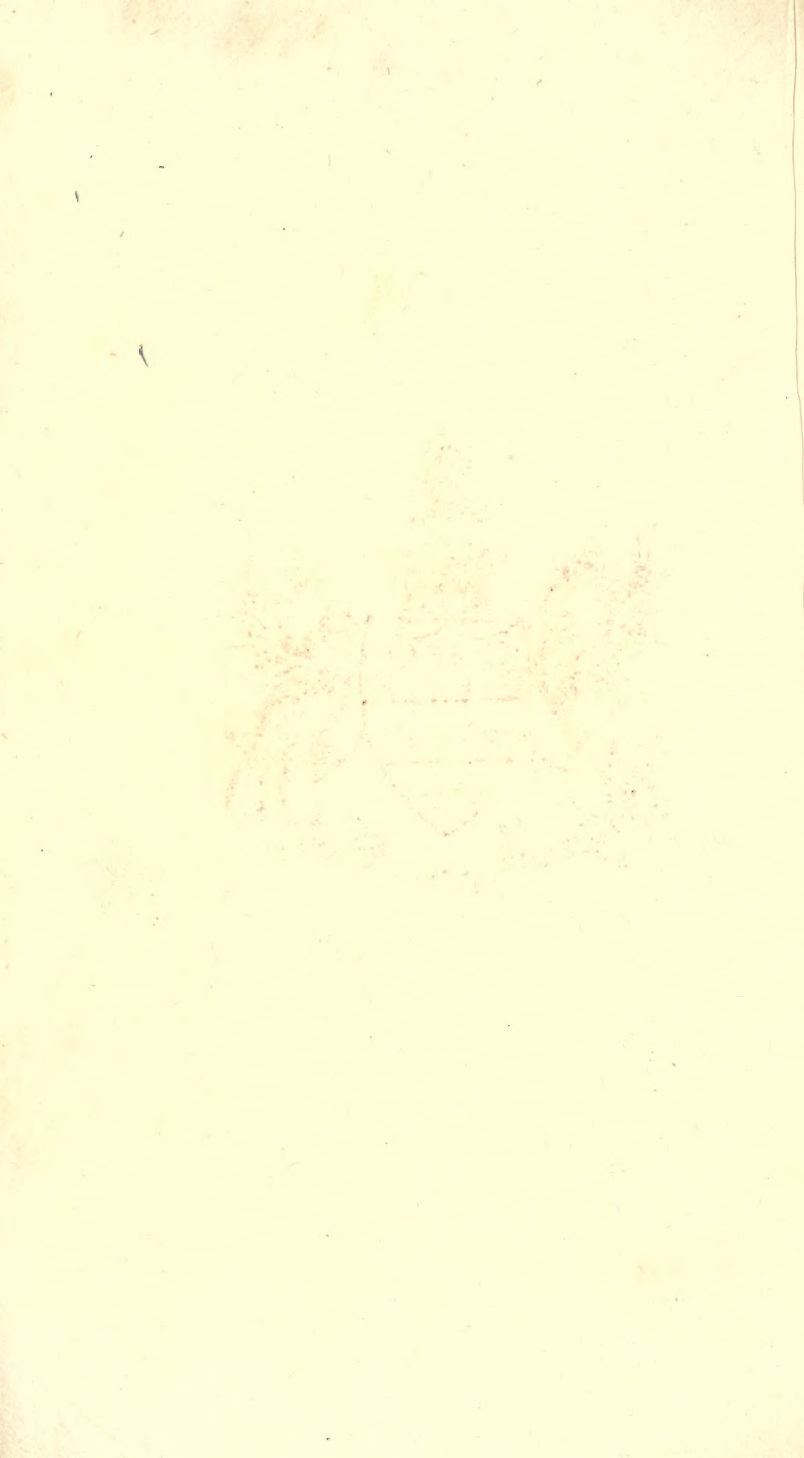


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Lord Walsingham.





A HELP

TO

THE UNLEARNED

IN THE

STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES:

BEING

AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN THE BIBLE IN A
FAMILIAR WAY.

ADAPTED TO COMMON APPREHENSIONS, AND ACCORDING TO
THE OPINIONS OF APPROVED COMMENTATORS.

By Mrs. TRIMMER,

AUTHOR OF SACRED HISTORY, SELECTED FROM THE SCRIPTURES,
WITH ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,
AND OTHER WORKS;
AND EDITOR OF THE GUARDIAN OF EDUCATION.

LONDON:

Printed by T. Bensley, Bolt Court,

FOR F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD;
AND J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY.

1805.

A-HELP

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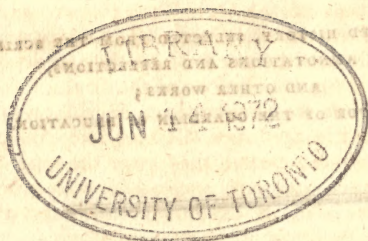
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LONDON:

Printed by T. Bensley, 10, St. Paul's Church Yard.

FOR T. AND J. WINGGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD;
AND J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY.

1863.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following book was composed with the hope of rendering the study of THE BIBLE easy and profitable to those who have but little leisure, or who may not be able to understand expositions of Scripture in which more learning is displayed. The endeavour of the compiler has been to explain what is difficult, as far as is necessary for Christians in general to understand it; and to direct the attention of the *Bible Student* to such passages and texts, as require particular consideration, in order to produce a *rational faith*, and a right practice, founded immediately upon the WORD OF GOD.

But before any person begins to study the chapters of the BIBLE with the Explanation, it may be useful to examine that part of the volume which is not SCRIPTURE, namely, the *Title-Page, Epistle Dedicatory, and the Names and Orders of all the Books, &c.*

THE TITLE PAGE is the first printed leaf. The book is here called the HOLY BIBLE, because it was not written by the wisdom of men, but by the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, who put into the minds of the writers what they were to write, for the instruction, admonition, and comfort of mankind concerning holy and divine things.

THE BIBLE consists of two principal parts, the OLD TESTAMENT, and the NEW TESTAMENT: the first of these contains what GOD saw fit to have written before the coming of CHRIST; the latter contains the history of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, his divine discourses, and the doctrine of his Apostles.

The *original tongues* from which the BIBLE was translated, signify the languages in which this Holy Book was first written. The original language of the OLD TESTAMENT was *Hebrew*, that of the NEW TESTAMENT, *Greek*. To translate a book, is to put the sense of it into the words of another language. There have been a great many translations of the BIBLE into different languages; that which we now have in *English*, was done by a number of the most learned men the kingdom ever produced; who, that they might be certain they gave the true sense and meaning of every part, *diligently compared it* with other translations, and then *revised it*, or examined it over and over again, that there might be no errors in their translation.

To prevent the *English BIBLE* from being altered and corrupted; no persons are allowed to print it but those who have a *privilege* from the King. At the bottom of the leaf, we may always see where any particular BIBLE was printed, and who are appointed to sell it to the booksellers.

The next leaves after the *Title Page* contain the *Epistle Dedicatory*, addressed to *King James the First* by the bishops and other learned men, who, in his reign, and by his authority, made this translation of the *Bible*. When the Roman Catholic Religion prevailed in the nation, the *Pope* forbade the reading of the Scriptures by the people, and they knew no more of them, than the Romish priests told them. After the death of *Queen Elizabeth*, there was great fear that some Roman Catholic Prince might be raised to the throne, but *King James* favoured the *Protestant Religion*, so called because those who professed it, protested against the errors of Popery; and the use of the *Bible* by the people at large was allowed.

We should observe in the *Epistle Dedicatory*, what the learned and pious translators of the *Bible* thought of this holy book, after having studied it with the greatest care and diligence; and we should learn of them, to consider the "*sacred word of God*," that is the *Bible*, as that "*inestimable treasure*, which excelleth all the riches of the earth; because the fruit thereof extendeth itself, not only to the time spent in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth men unto that eternal happiness which is in heaven above." We should also consider how great must be the sin of those, who being possessed of this "*inestimable treasure*," seldom look into the *Bible*, but spend the time that should be employed in studying the *Scriptures*, in reading books which corrupt the mind, and lead to the practice of wickedness.

The Names and Order of all the Books in the OLD TESTAMENT, and NEW TESTAMENT, show how the different Books follow one another in the *Bible*.

All the writers of the *OLD TESTAMENT* were Israelites, persons descended from the Patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, they were the chosen people of *God*, and the *OLD TESTAMENT* relates to them in a particular manner, though it was designed for all mankind. The *first five Books* are called the *Books of Moses*, and *the Law*; they were written by *Moses* the great Lawgiver of the Israelites. The Books that follow as far as the *BOOK OF ESTHER* are called the *HISTORICAL BOOKS*. The histories they contain differ from all the other histories that ever were written, for they give an account of the *ways of God*; and explain *why God protected and rewarded* some persons and nations, and *why he punished* others; also, *what led* particular persons mentioned in Scripture to *do* certain things for which they were approved or condemned; whereas writers who compose histories in a common way, without being *inspired of God*, can only form guesses and conjectures concerning *God's* dealings with mankind, neither can they know what passed in the hearts of those they write about; such knowledge as this, belongs to *God* alone, whose ways are *unsearchable and past finding out*, and *to whom all hearts are open, all desires known*!

The *BOOK OF JOB* contains a wonderful example of patience

under

under the severest temptations and trials that any mere man was ever exposed to.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS is a collection of *Divine Hymns* written by *King David*, and other inspired writers. This is a most valuable Book, as it instructs us how to worship God, and furnishes us with proper prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, *inspired by the HOLY GHOST*. The Psalms also contain many of God's Promises and Threatenings.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS is a collection of wise maxims for the conduct of human life; written by *King Solomon*.

ECCLESIASTES is another book written by *Solomon*, in which is shown the *vanity of all earthly enjoyments*.

SOLOMON'S SONG. This book is very difficult to be explained, but the learned understand it to relate to *CHRIST and his Church*.

The remaining books of the OLD TESTAMENT, beginning with *ISAIAH* and ending with *MALACHI*, are called the PROPHECIES, because they were written by the *Prophets*, persons inspired of *God* to foretel things to come. The *Prophets* did not all live at the same time, but followed one another in succession for above a thousand years. They give an account of God's government of nations, and show the righteousness of his dealings with mankind. There were many other Prophets besides those who wrote these books. The *first four* here named, are called the *greater Prophets*, the *twelve last*, the *Minor or Lesser Prophets*.

The BOOKS called the APOCRYPHA, are not reckoned as part of the HOLY SCRIPTURES, because it is not known for a certainty that the writers of them were inspired by the Holy Ghost; but they are preserved with the Bible on account of their great antiquity, and valuable instruction they contain.

OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT the first four are called GOSPELS. The word GOSPEL means *Good Tidings*. The tidings of the Gospel are *Forgiveness and remission of Sins, salvation and everlasting life and happiness to mankind through JESUS CHRIST*.

The book called THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES gives an account of what those Holy Men the *Apostles* of our LORD JESUS CHRIST did and suffered to prove the truth of the GOSPEL which they preached.

THE EPISTLES which follow *the book of the ACTS* are Letters which some of the Apostles whose names are given, wrote to the different Churches, or Societies of Christians they established. The writers of the NEW TESTAMENT are all called SAINTS, or *Holy Men*; and those who wrote the GOSPELS are called also EVANGELISTS.

THE REVELATION OF JOHN THE DIVINE contains prophecies relating to the *Church of CHRIST*, from the time of the Apostles to the end of the world.

Such are the *Contents of the BIBLE*; we should next consider for what purposes God caused this *Holy Book* to be written, which we may learn from one text of Scripture; *All Scripture,*
(says

(says St. Paul,) *is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works**. By which is meant, that the **SCRIPTURES** declare and confirm the truth; that they convince us of sin; that they teach us how to reform and amend our lives; that they instruct us in the knowledge of that righteousness by which alone we can be saved, and put those who are desirous to please God, into the way of gaining the divine blessing and favour here, and an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven hereafter. Surely such a book as this should be *read and studied* by all to whom it is made known! And it has pleased God to cause the **HOLY SCRIPTURES** to be written with such clearness and plainness, that all who will study them with humility and diligence may understand, at least as much of them as is necessary for their comfort in this world, and their salvation in the next. Those who have but little leisure, therefore, have no occasion to puzzle themselves to find out *hidden meanings* in difficult passages; they should keep to the *easier parts*: but all must remember, that no one can become a good Christian merely by reading or hearing the Word of God. The way to profit by the Bible is so admirably pointed out in one of the *Collects* of our excellent Liturgy, that we will add it here for *instruction and use*, as it fully explains what every one ought to do, and at the same time furnishes words, which, when accompanied with the sincere wishes of the heart, cannot fail of being approved by the **DIVINE AUTHOR of the SACRED VOLUME**.

Collect for the second Sunday in Advent.

“Blessed **LORD** who hast caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour, **JESUS CHRIST**.”

Before we conclude this Introduction, it will be proper to add a few words concerning the manner in which the following book is intended to be used, which is merely this. When any particular chapter is to be read in the **BIBLE**, let the Book be opened where the chapter is explained; then let the reader look into the *Explanation*, and see how many verses are explained in the *first paragraph*, and read them in the **BIBLE**, stopping at the end of those verses, to read the *Explanation*, and then proceeding in the same manner to the end of the chapter.

May the grace of **GOD** supply every defect in this humble attempt to promote the knowledge of true religion, and the practice of piety and virtue; and render it conducive to the end for which it was composed.

A
HELP TO THE UNLEARNED,
&c.

GENESIS.

THIS Book, with which the BIBLE begins, is the first of the PENTATEUCH, or *five books written by MOSES, the great prophet and law-giver of the Jews*; who was inspired by the HOLY GHOST to give an account of the beginning of all things, and of GOD's wonderful dealings with mankind in the early ages of the world, and with the Jewish nation in particular.

CHAPTER I.

Read this chapter with great attention, for on what it reveals the whole of religion is founded; it teaches us that there is ONE GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE; and acquaints us with many important particulars which could never have been known if the CREATOR himself had not been pleased to reveal them, for *his ways are far above our ways*, and we cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection.*

Ver. 1. Observe, that the heavens over our heads, and the earth we live on, had a *beginning*, and that all things were made by one CREATOR, the ALMIGHTY GOD.

Ver. 2. to 6 Observe, that the CREATOR has been graciously pleased to reveal the order he followed in bringing the world into form, and preparing it for the living creatures that were to dwell in it. Consider the great difference there is betwixt *light* and *darkness*, and how wonderful it was that GOD, by his word only, should bring *light* out of *darkness*,

* Job vii. 11.

Observe, that the CREATOR divided the time he saw fit to employ in the works of the creation into *days* and *nights*. This division of time is very comfortable, particularly to those who labour for their daily bread. The return of *every morning* and *evening* should therefore remind us to be thankful to God for the work of the *first day*.

Ver. 6 to 9. The firmament is that which we call the *sky*. Consider that this also is a great blessing, as it keeps the world from being entirely overflowed with water, and at the same time furnishes supplies for rain to water the earth when it is wanted. By making a firmament, the CREATOR also furnished AIR, without which no living creature could breathe; and it is equally necessary for trees and plants. We have therefore great cause to be thankful to God for the work of the *second day*.

Ver. 9 to 14. Observe, God gathered the waters that *were below the firmament* into great hollow places which he prepared to receive them, leaving *dry land* between, by which means the world became a fit habitation for the various kinds of creatures that were to live both in the water and on the earth. Observe, that the CREATOR graciously provided for the sustenance of all living creatures before he brought them into existence. Consider how wonderful it was that the earth should, in the course of *one day*, bring forth in perfection trees, plants, and herbs, of all kinds. Consider also, what a blessing it is to have food to eat, and seed to sow for future years; and surely you will be thankful to God for the work of the *third day*.

Ver. 14 to 20. Consider how wonderful the *sun*, *moon*, and *stars*, are in themselves, how delightful it is to behold them. Consider also, how very comfortable and useful it is to have time divided as it is by means of these bright luminaries. And when you view the sun, and the moon, and the stars, shining in the firmament of the heavens, lift up your heart with gratitude to the glorious CREATOR of them for the works of the *fourth day*.

Ver. 20 to 24. Observe, that when the world was properly prepared for their comfortable dwelling and subsistence, and not till then, numbers of *living creatures* were in one day brought into being from the waters, all in their proper places. Observe, *ver. 21*, that some of these creatures were of an
amazing

amazing large size, yet they were produced at *once*, as well as the smallest of the fishes of the sea and of the feathered tribes. Consider how wonderful every one of these creatures was in itself, and of what use their different kinds have been to mankind, and admire and adore the CREATOR for the works of the *fifth day*.

Ver. 24 to 26. Observe here, that numbers of different kinds of living creatures were produced from the earth, and that the strongest beasts as well as the smallest insects were formed *at once* by the CREATOR, each perfect in its kind; and observe, that a blessing was bestowed upon all living creatures, that no kind might be lost.

Ver. 26 to 29. Observe farther, that the world was completed and all the lower creatures were created before man was brought into being, and that then one HUMAN PAIR only was created. Take notice, that mankind were of a nature far above the other creatures, being made in the IMAGE OF GOD, bearing some likeness to their CREATOR, and that they were to rule over the rest. Observe also, *ver. 28*, the BLESSING which GOD pronounced upon the *first pair*, which signified that multitudes of creatures like themselves should proceed from them, and that mankind should fill the earth with inhabitants, make use of its productions, and have rule and dominion over all the other creatures in it. Consider the great goodness of GOD in creating mankind, and bestowing such privileges upon them, and be thankful to him for the blessings of the *sixth day*.

Ver. 29 to 31. Observe, that the CREATOR appointed to mankind the food they were to eat, and that GOD appointed food for all the *lower creatures* also, lest man should think all things were made for him alone; and that, though mankind have dominion over the lower creatures, the latter have a right to feed upon the *green herbs* provided for their sustenance by the bounty of the CREATOR; so that mankind cannot withhold their proper food from the brute beasts without offending their MAKER.

Ver. 31. Observe, that when GOD had ended his works of creation, he pronounced them GOOD; every thing was perfect in its kind, and could not be improved by alteration in any respect; and consider what a delightful place the world must

have been when it came out of the hands of the CREATOR, when MANKIND bore the image of their MAKER, and when peace and harmony prevailed throughout. But the goodness of GOD to mankind did not stop here, as appears in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. Observe, from this verse, that every thing belonging to the world was created within the *six days*; from that time every kind of creature has produced *its like*, and *increased and multiplied* according to the *blessing of the LORD*, which is very wonderful.

Ver. 2, 3. To *bless* any thing is to make it the means of the greatest happiness to those who possess it—to *sanctify* any thing, is to set it apart from common uses for the peculiar service of GOD. By *blessing the seventh day*, GOD ordained it to be a day of extraordinary comfort and happiness to mankind, and by *sanctifying it*, He set it apart as his *own day*, to be devoted to his peculiar service. How the *sabbath day* should be spent, we learn from the *fourth commandment*, and other parts of scripture; those who add it to their days of labour, or make it a day of idleness, folly, and wickedness, will certainly bring a curse upon themselves, instead of the promised blessing, and greatly offend their MAKER. Never forget that every human creature ought to *keep holy the seventh day*, because it is the SABBATH of the LORD our GOD, who *blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*. Observe, *ver. 5*, some particulars not mentioned in the first chapter, which show that the LORD GOD formed every kind of tree and plant, and caused them all to grow up to perfection before there was a MAN upon the earth to till the ground, and without employing the usual mean which is now employed of sending rain from heaven to water them, which shows that the Creator has no need of the help of any of his creatures to bring his works to perfection; but that, on the contrary, without the blessing of GOD, all the labour of man would be fruitless.

Ver. 7. Observe, that the MAN was created before the WOMAN, and that he had an *earthly nature*, and a *spiritual nature*;

nature; his *body* was *earthly*, his *soul* was *spiritual*—in the first he was related to the beasts, in the latter he bore the *image of God*, for **GOD** is a **SPIRIT**.

Ver. 8 to 15. Observe the great goodness of **GOD** to mankind in preparing for their abode a delightful garden, which was a paradise or place of bliss, a lively type or figure of Heaven; for in it grew the **TREE OF LIFE**, the emblem of immortality, and it was sanctified by the *visible* **PRESENCE OF THE CREATOR**. The exact situation of Paradise cannot now be known, but, from the account we have of the rivers that flowed from it, we may understand that it was in the eastern part of the world. Observe, *ver. 15*, that to keep man from idleness the **LORD** allotted him an easy and a pleasant task, such an one as people, who know what true pleasure is, still choose as an amusement, that of *dressing and keeping a garden*.

Ver. 16 to 18. That **MAN** might have no fears of being deprived of the blessings of Paradise, or suppose on the other hand that he had a natural right to them, the **LORD GOD** made a **COVENANT** with him, that he would continue to mankind the blessings of Paradise, upon condition that they would keep from eating of the **TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL**, planted by the **TREE OF LIFE**; and to encourage them to keep His commandment, the **LORD GOD** gave them leave freely to eat of every other tree in the garden. This was a very easy commandment, and if mankind had kept it they would have gained the *reward of righteousness*; which, as we learn from other parts of scripture, is *eternal life and happiness in heaven*. Observe, that this **COVENANT** which **GOD** made with man when he placed him in the garden of Eden, is called the **COVENANT OF WORKS**; because that, according to the condition of it, man's life and happiness depended upon *his own works*. Observe also, that *death* was to be the punishment of man's *disobedience to the law of GOD*.

Ver. 18 to 21. Observe, that the **LORD** knowing that, without a companion possessing the gifts of *reason* and *speech*, the man would lead a solitary life, graciously resolved to give him one of the same nature with himself; but, first, the **LORD** made the other creatures pass in review before Adam, that he might see there was not one equal to himself. Ob-

serve also, that Adam having *dominion over the lower creatures*, had the privilege of *giving names* to them.

Ver. 21 to the end. Observe, that the woman was not formed like the man immediately from the *earth*, but Adam was convinced she was of the same nature with himself, as she was taken from his side. Though there is no mention made of God's breathing into *her* the breath of life, we may be sure he did so, for it appears, from her words and actions afterwards, that she had, like Adam, a *spiritual nature*. Without a soul she would not have been a *helpmate*, or fit *companion*, for Adam. Observe, what Adam said, *ver. 24*, which he must have spoken in consequence of what God had revealed to him, for he declared the *marriage law*, which is alluded to by our Saviour, *Matt. chap. xix. ver. 4, 5*, as having been made at the creation by the CREATOR. As the woman was made a partaker of the blessings of Paradise, she was of course subject to the law of God, and liable to the penalty of death if she broke it.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 7. When Adam and Eve were placed in Paradise they had every thing they could reasonably desire in this world; and the means of gaining eternal happiness in heaven; but they had a secret enemy, the devil, a wicked spirit who was once a glorious angel in heaven, but was cast out from that blessed place with many other angels who joined him for rebelling against the LORD GOD. The devil, envying the happy condition of mankind, resolved to ruin them; for this purpose, by the power he had as a spirit, he entered into the body of the serpent, (a creature which at the creation had more sense than any of the brute creatures,) that he might by that means tempt them to break God's commandment; and it pleased God to suffer them to be tempted, in order to prove whether they were willing to depend on his word and obey his commandment, and so gain a heavenly reward, which they could not have shown if they had not been tempted. But the devil had no power to force them to sin, and they were endued with the gift of reason, which, if they had made use of it, would have told them, that they were not

to give credit to any word that was contrary to the word of GOD, nor desire any thing which GOD had forbidden. Compare what the devil said to the woman, *ver. 1*, with what the LORD GOD said when he gave the commandment, *chap. ii. ver. 16, 17*. Observe, how very artfully the devil talked to the woman, tempting her to wish to be of a higher nature than GOD had made her, and to know more than GOD saw fit to reveal; also, how he raised in her mind an unlawful desire to satisfy her appetite with forbidden fruit, when it was her duty to be contented with what GOD had given to her for food. This shows that the devil is a most wicked malicious spirit, and very deceitful; that he hates GOD and goodness; and that he was from the beginning of the world an enemy to mankind.

Ver. 6 to 9. Observe, that the woman gave way to the devil's temptations, though she knew it was against GOD's commandment to do so; this was *committing sin*. Had she *resisted the devil*, that is, refused to follow his advice, and declared a resolution to obey GOD, the devil would have fled away from her as he did from our Saviour when he tempted him in the wilderness, (*See Matth. chap. iv. and James, chap. iv. ver. 7.*) When Eve had committed sin, she made herself the servant of the devil; and observe, that he set her to work, for he led her on to tempt her husband, and Adam, yielding to the temptation, became a *sinner* also; and thus the first pair forfeited the favour of GOD, and that eternal life and happiness with which GOD would have rewarded them had they resisted temptation and obeyed his commandment; for though nothing is said in this part of scripture concerning an heavenly reward, we may learn from other parts, that such a reward was provided for the righteous before the world was created. (*See Matth. chap. xxv. ver 34, 46.*)

Ver. 7 to 9. Observe, that in consequence of eating the forbidden fruit the *eyes of the first pair* were indeed *opened*, but in a very different manner from what the devil had made them expect. They knew *evil* as well as *good*, but instead of becoming gods, they became sensible that, having forfeited the favour of GOD, they were poor helpless creatures, who had nothing they could call their own, and who had justly brought death upon themselves. The first fruits of their sin were *shame* and *fear*; they could no longer go with joy to

meet the LORD GOD in the place where he appeared in a glorious manner and conversed with them, neither could they hide themselves from his all-seeing eye, or disguise themselves so that God should not know them.

Ver. 9 to the end. Observe, that when Adam and Eve were ashamed and afraid to appear, the LORD graciously called them to him, not to strike them instantly dead, as they deserved, but to show mercy to them, to make a NEW COVENANT, to give them hopes of a SAVIOUR, even before he passed sentence upon them for their sin. Read attentively the sentence passed upon *the Tempter*, by which the creature, the devil had made use of, was condemned to become a reptile crawling upon the earth, instead of being the most excellent of the beasts of the field; and the devil himself to be finally overcome by the Seed of the Woman, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the son of the Virgin Mary. Observe, that the devil was trying to *bruise his heel*, by which is understood, to do injury to the cause of true Religion; but that the *Seed of the Woman* was to *bruise his head*, by which is understood that Christ would finally destroy all the power of the devil. Observe next, the Sentence which the LORD GOD passed upon the woman, and that which was passed upon the man, which shows, that though mankind were to be saved from *everlasting death*, for the sake of the SAVIOUR who was to lay down his life for them, God condemned them to suffer *labour and sorrow* in this world, and at length to *return to the dust from whence they were taken*, that is, to die. The skins with which God clothed Adam and Eve are supposed to have been those of animals he had commanded them to offer in sacrifice; for though there is no mention of sacrifices here, we read in the next chapter of offerings made by the first sons of Adam and Eve. Observe, *ver. 20*, that Adam foretold that his wife would have children: this must have been revealed to him by the LORD GOD. God sent Adam and Eve away from the Tree of Life, because they were now under the condemnation of death, and unworthy of the blessings of Paradise, which were intended for them only while they continued in a state of innocence.—They might be said to die, the day they eat the forbidden fruit, because they then became subject to death. The cherubims, *ver. 24*, were angels. Observe, that, from the history of the fall of our first parents, Adam and

and Eve, we learn how SIN and DEATH first came into the world.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 9.—Observe, that the woman soon became a mother, as Adam foretold, when he gave her the proper name of Eve; and we find that her two first sons followed different occupations. From what is said concerning the offerings of Cain and Abel, we may understand that sacrifices, as we observed in the last chapter, had been ordained of GOD after the Fall; but we must look in other parts of scripture for a more particular account of sacrifices, and the design of them, where we shall find that the sacrifice of a *lamb without blemish* was designed to represent the great sacrifice which the promised SAVIOUR was to make at GOD's appointed time for the sins of the world. We may conclude that Abel's sacrifice was of this nature, and it was probably ordained of GOD, immediately after the Fall, as a token of the *covenant of grace* which GOD had made with mankind. Turn to the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and read the fourth verse, which shows that Abel's offering was more acceptable to the LORD than Cain's, because it was offered with faith. Observe, that though the devil is not mentioned here, it is very plain from Cain's whole behaviour and conduct, that he was tempted by that wicked spirit, and that he yielded to his temptation. First, he was tempted to neglect the proper sacrifice for sin, which was departing from the ordinance of GOD; then to hate his brother because he was more righteous than himself; and at length to kill him. See what our Saviour says of the devil in one of his divine discourses, *John, chap. viii. ver. 44.*

Ver. 9 to 16. Observe, that Cain's crime was known to GOD though he thought no eye saw him when he killed his brother. Though GOD saw fit to suffer Abel to fall by the hand of his wicked brother, we may be certain that he gave him the reward of righteousness, even eternal life and happiness in another world; nor would the LORD suffer the murderer to escape punishment. Read the sentence pronounced upon Cain, and consider what a shocking thing it was to him, as

an husbandman, to have the *ground cursed to him*, to live in a state of continual fear and dread, flying from place to place. But above all, consider how dreadful it was to be *driven from the FACE of the LORD*, from that place where the LORD showed forth his glory, and received the offerings of his faithful servants. What the *mark* was which GOD set upon Cain is not said ; it is enough for us to know that it pointed him out to all who saw him as the *murderer*. As GOD saw fit that Cain should live a wretched life, as an example to others, instead of being put to death ; it would have been presumptuous in any one to have slain him. Observe, that Cain was totally separated from Adam and Eve, and the rest of the family, excepting his wife, who went with him to settle in a different place.

Ver. 17 to 25. These verses contain the *genealogy* of Cain, that is, an account of his family. Some of them are mentioned as the inventors of useful arts, but not one of them for their goodness, from whence we may learn that GOD bestows various gifts upon wicked people, not for their own sakes, but to make them useful in the world. The *Father of such as live in tents*, &c. *ver. 20, 21*, signify the men who invented these things. Observe, that *Lamech*, one of Cain's posterity, was the first who had two wives, which was contrary to the law of marriage ordained of GOD at the creation—he was also a murderer, but who he killed is not mentioned.

It appears that Adam and Eve were in favour with GOD, by his giving them another son to supply the place of Abel. Observe, that after the birth of Enos, *men began to call upon the name of the LORD*, by which is understood that Seth and the rest of Adam's family, excepting Cain and his descendants, who were driven from the *presence of the LORD*, because he corrupted the true religion, were in covenant with GOD, and were allowed to call themselves *the people of the LORD*. They were the CHURCH OF GOD, and doubtless kept up the true religion in the way of GOD's appointment, by observing the sabbath and offering the proper sacrifice for sin.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to the end. This chapter contains the *generation* of Adam in the line of Seth. Observe, that of Adam's sons Seth only is mentioned by name, because from him the *promised seed of the woman* was to descend. Observe also, that Adam's son was not born in the *image of God*, but in the image or likeness of *Adam*, namely, with a corrupt nature, subject to death for the sin of Adam; and this has been the case with all the race of Adam, that is, of every child that has been born into the world, and no human creature could possibly have saved himself from eternal death. The work of *salvation*, which is fully explained in the *New Testament*, could only have been wrought by the *free grace of God*, through a *Mediator*. Observe, how long the lives of the first men were, and that it pleased God to spare the life of Adam for many years after the Fall, to give him time for repentance; and, as nothing is said of his disobedience after the Fall, we may conclude he was of the number of those who *called on the name of the Lord*. Observe, *ver. 22*, what is said of Enoch, and turn to the *Epistle of St. Jude, ver. 14, 15*, where you will see that the world was become very wicked in his time, and that Enoch was a prophet, and prophesied of a future state, in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished. Enoch's being taken up to Heaven without dying, was a miracle, which, whilst it rewarded him for his extraordinary piety, served to confirm the truth of his prophecy, and to strengthen the faith of all who *walked with God*. Observe, *ver. 27*, to what a great age Methuselah lived; he was in the world with Adam, and also with Noah. Take particular notice of Lamech's prophecy, *ver. 29*, which is understood to relate to God's removing the curse he pronounced on the earth at Adam's Fall, and restoring the blessing in the days of Noah. Remember the names of Noah's three sons.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 8. Those called the *sons of God*, *ver. 2*, were the generation of Seth, the people who called themselves by the *name of the LORD*. The *children of men* were the generation of Cain. The *sons of GOD*, that is, those who were in covenant with GOD to keep to the true religion, ought to have kept themselves entirely separate from the *sons of men*, for the latter had given themselves up to wickedness, and by marrying among them the *sons of GOD* became in time like them, doers of all kinds of wickedness. It appears, from *ver. 3*, that GOD gave the help of his HOLY SPIRIT to those who were in covenant with him after the Fall, and that when they erred and strayed from his commandments, *his spirit strove with them* in various ways to bring them to repentance and a sense of their duty, and that in particular GOD sent prophets, or preachers of righteousness, to admonish them, who spake as the Holy Spirit inspired; but notwithstanding this, mankind became so wicked that GOD at length resolved to take his HOLY SPIRIT from them, and to cut them off from the earth; yet he gave them the farther time of an *hundred and twenty years*, to repent and amend their lives, and in the meantime they had Noah as a preacher of righteousness, as St. Peter informs us, *1 Epist. chap. iii. ver. 19 and 20*.

Observe, to what a pitch of wickedness mankind were arrived, when *every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually*. The expressions, *ver. 6*, *the LORD repented* and it *grieved him to the heart*, signify only that the LORD resolved to treat mankind as if he repented of having made them.

Ver. 9 to 17. Observe, that Noah found grace or favour in the sight of the LORD, because he was righteous in his generation. From the expressions, *ver. 11, 12, 13*, that *the earth was corrupt*, that *all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth*, and that *the earth was filled with violence*, we learn that all mankind had departed from the worship of GOD, and that they practised all kinds of cruelty and injustice. If Noah
had

had not continued righteous, true religion would have been totally lost in the world.

Ver. 17 to the end. Take particular notice of the LORD's words, *ver. 17, Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth*, which shows that the flood did not happen by chance, or by means of any of those idols which were called gods, but by the power of the CREATOR alone, who having made the world could unmake it.

The covenant which GOD promised to *establish* with Noah, *ver. 18*, was that which he made with Adam and Eve after the Fall, concerning the *promised seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head*. Observe, *ver. 21*, the goodness of GOD in providing for the maintenance of Noah and his family, and all the living creatures that were to be preserved in the ark.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, that Noah gave a strong proof of his faith, or belief, in GOD's promises and threatenings when he entered into the ark. By *clean beasts, ver. 8, 9*, are understood those which were appointed to be offered in sacrifice, of which we read in the Book of Leviticus.

Ver. 15 to the end. Think how wonderful it was that some of every kind of living creatures should come to Noah to be taken into the ark; this must have been the work of GOD. Observe, that GOD shut Noah and those that were with him safely into the ark, before he put his threatenings in execution against the wicked inhabitants of the world; that, though GOD had long before given warning of the flood, the judgment was *sudden* to the wicked, because they kept on in their usual way, though they were warned by Noah, and saw him preparing the ark; and remember, that GOD's threatenings, though long delayed, are not in vain. Consider what a dreadful judgment the flood was, and how great the power of GOD must be, who could bring it to pass!

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 20. Consider the great goodness of GOD in remembering Noah and those who were with him in the ark, and in drying the ground and restoring it to order after he had destroyed the wicked by the flood! With what joy Noah must beheld the ground dry, and the trees and plants again springing forth! How delighted he and his family must have felt when they received GOD's command to go out of the ark! Think, also, what a wonderful instance it was of the providence of GOD, that living creatures of so many different kinds should be shut up together in a small vessel for one hundred and fifty days, and not one of them die!

Ver. 20 to the end. Observe, that the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark, was to return thanksgivings to GOD for preserving him and those who were with him; and that he offered sacrifices, which GOD accepted. This shows that these sacrifices were *ordained of GOD*, and that they made a part of the true religion. The expression, *the LORD smelled a sweet savour*, means only that the sacrifice was pleasing to GOD. Take notice, what the LORD graciously promised, *ver. 21 and 22*, and recollect how faithfully this promise has been fulfilled to this very time.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe, that the blessing which the LORD gave to Noah and his sons, was the same as that which he gave to Adam at the creation; with this addition, that in future mankind might feed on the flesh of animals. The earth might now be considered as a new world.

Ver. 4 to 8. Observe, that GOD after the flood made a *law against murder*; and take notice, *ver. 6*, on what account it is so great a sin to shed man's blood.

Ver. 8 to 18. Take particular notice of the *covenant* which GOD established with Noah and his sons; that it was to be an *everlasting covenant with perpetual generations*, that is, a cove-

nant

nant which should remain to the end of the world, though GOD foresaw that mankind would be wicked. Observe also, what was to be *the token of the covenant*, or the sign which GOD appointed to put mankind in mind that GOD had graciously promised not to destroy the earth again by a flood of waters. The sight of the RAINBOW should always remind us of this covenant, and lead us to acknowledge with thanksgiving the faithfulness of GOD's promises. Observe, *verse 10*, that this covenant was not made with mankind only, but with all living creatures.

Ver. 18 to 20. The inhabitants of the earth were reduced by the flood to *eight persons* only of mankind, who, in process of time, under the blessing of GOD, multiplied so as to overspread the whole earth, but not till many years afterwards.

Ver. 20 to 24. Noah probably did not know what effect wine would have upon him; but we may learn from his example to beware of strong drink. Solomon says, *Prov. xx, ver. 1, wine is a mocker*, and we here see his words verified, for wine exposed Noah to the mockery of his own sons. It was very wicked of Ham to discover the faults of his parent, but Shem and Japhet acted like dutiful sons.

Ver. 24 to the end. Noah at this time did not speak *his own words*, he was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT to utter a *prophecy* respecting the Canaanites who were to proceed from Ham. The meaning of which was, that this people should in future times be slaves to the nations that were to proceed from Shem and Japhet. GOD knew the wicked heart of Ham, and punished him by *curfing* him in his posterity; but the descendants of Ham would not have been cursed had not GOD foreknown that they would be wicked idolaters. To be *curfed*, signifies to be cut off from being the people of GOD. In reward of the piety and goodness of Shem and Japhet, GOD blessed them and their posterity. Noah's prophecy concerning Shem, signified that the true religion would be kept up in his line; and that respecting Japhet, signified that many of his posterity should be persuaded to join in it.* GOD was called the LORD GOD of Shem, because the *promised seed of the woman* was to proceed from him, and because the true religion would be kept up in his family.

* In the margin the word *persuade* is put instead of *enlarge*.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter shows that all the nations of the world came of one or the other of the three sons of Noah, but it was a long while after the flood before the whole earth was peopled.

CHAPTER XI.

We have seen, in the *9th chapter*, that one of the sons of Noah began to be wicked soon after the flood; and we find, from this chapter, that as mankind multiplied, wickedness increased, for they certainly must have departed from the true religion before they could set about an undertaking which was designed to frustrate what they supposed to be the will of the Almighty. Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, in the *10th chap. ver. 8*, is said to have *begun to be a mighty one in the earth*, and to have founded Babel, (afterwards called Babylon,) and other cities in the land of Shinar: we may therefore conclude that Nimrod was at the head of those who are said in this *chapter, ver. 2 to 5*, to have set about building the Tower of Babel. Observe, that the very scheme they contrived to prevent their being scattered, proved the means of their being so; for the Almighty can bring about his own purposes by any means he thinks fit, and God frequently makes the wicked the instruments of their own punishment. From *ver. 25, chap. 10*, we are led to think that the inhabitants of the earth were scattered abroad, as mentioned in *ver. 9 of this chapter*, in the days of Peleg, who was of the race of Shem, the fourth from him in regular descent, that is, his great, great, great-grandson.

The confusion of languages was a wonderful miracle, by which GOD displayed his almighty power, and punished all those who foolishly supposed they could defeat the purposes of their great CREATOR. Those who could not converse with or understand each other, could not live together, so they divided into parties, according to their different languages, and GOD sent them to the parts of the earth he had before allotted for

for them. Those parties became in time different nations and kingdoms; and it appears from Scripture that God not only governs the world by what is called a *general providence*, but that he overlooks every nation, and puts down one and raises up another as is right and proper for the good of the world, and the interests of religion; and that he frequently makes one wicked nation an instrument of punishment to others, and even to itself.

Ver. 10 to the end. These verses give the genealogy of Shem, which is placed here in order to prove that Abraham descended in a regular line from Shem; and it also helps to show, that our LORD JESUS CHRIST, according to his human nature, descended from Noah in the line of Shem. Observe, that the lives of men were much shortened after the flood.

CHAPTER XII.

In process of time all the nations of the earth fell into IDOLATRY, that is, they worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, air, and fire, many kinds of animals and reptiles, and made images of them according to their own fancies, to which they offered sacrifices of their own invention, instead of keeping to the true religion revealed from heaven as Noah did. Some of these nations worshipped idols only, others mixed the worship of idols with the worship of the LORD GOD, so that the true religion was every way corrupted; for every alteration in that which God himself ordains, is a *corruption*. It is a principal part of true religion to keep exactly to the ordinances of the Lord, for mankind never had liberty given them to make a religion for themselves, and to worship God according to their own imaginations: even the descendants of Shem became idolaters in some degree. This was the state of the world when God called Abram in order to make him the head of a great nation, which was to be kept separate from the rest of the nations; and to train him up in the practice of the true religion, and the expectation of the promised Saviour.

Ver. 1. From the LORD's calling Abram in this manner, we may suppose that Abram had an aversion to idolatry, or at least that what he did wrong in respect to religion, he

did ignorantly, from being born in a country where idolatrous worship prevailed.

Ver. 2, 3. Observe, that the promises which God made to Abram in the second verse, related to Abram himself, and the great nation that was to proceed from him; and that the promises, in the third verse, related to all mankind, who were to have the blessing of salvation through JESUS CHRIST.

Ver. 4 to 7. Take notice that Abram gave a strong proof of his faith in God's promises when he obeyed the divine command, and left his native country and friends to go into a strange land.

Ver. 7 to 10. It was the *land of Canaan* which was promised to Abram, not for himself, but for the great nation that was to proceed from him, which land was at that time possessed by the nations of the Canaanites, the people who descended from Canaan the son of Ham, the son of Noah. Observe, that Abram built an altar as soon as he arrived in Canaan, for the purpose of offering sacrifice as Noah had done after the flood, *and called on the name of the Lord*; that is, he worshipped God in the way ordained by the Lord himself, and him only, not joining idols with him; and this he did in every place he went to; for the fathers of families were then the priests of it.

Ver 10 to the end. Take notice where Abram went to, and why he went thither, and consider how his faith was tried by God's conducting him into a land where he could not at that time find subsistence. Observe, also, what danger Abram brought himself and his wife into, by deceiving Pharaoh through fear. This shews that Abram, though so good a man, was not free from faults. Indeed no mere human creature ever was so.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe, that the LORD blessed Abram with riches, but he did not covet them, and that Abram worshipped the LORD and paid no worship to idols, though all about him were idolaters. Take notice of Abram's kind behaviour to his nephew Lot, and observe, that these affectionate relations were obliged to separate on account of the quarrels
between

between their servants. Observe also, that, in making choice of a place to live in, Lot erred, for he pitched his tents near Sodom, because it was a *pleasant* place; without considering whether the people he was to live amongst were good or bad, which afterwards brought great distresses upon him. This should teach us that the first thing people should consider in changing their place of abode, is, where they can best do their duty towards God. Servants in particular should be very careful not to go into families where religion is not attended to; many young men and women have been corrupted by bad examples in their superiors, and by the wickedness of fellow-servants.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, that God supported the faith of Abram by fresh promises. The promise made, *ver. 14.* &c. related only to the great nation that was to proceed from Abram, not to all the families of the earth. *Ver. 18* shows that Abram kept to the worship of the true God, and in the right way, and that he was careful to keep up the true religion in his family.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 18. We have here an account of the first misfortune that happened to Lot in consequence of his living among wicked people. Observe, that Abram became very powerful and great in a short time, through the blessing of God, and that he continued his kindness to Lot.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, what is said of Melchizedec, and the blessing he pronounced upon Abram, and what Abram gave to the priest of the most high God. From which we learn that it is agreeable to the will of God that his people should pay tithes to his ministers. Farmers, therefore, and others of whom tithes are demanded, should pay them to the clergy with a willing mind, as an offering to God for increasing the fruits of the earth.

Abram's answer to the King of Sodom, and the reason he gave for refusing to take any of the goods he offered to him, shows that Abram had resolved to trust to the LORD's promises for all things.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 7. The LORD's comfortable words to Abram, *ver. 1*, signified that GOD would both protect and reward him for being faithful and obedient. Observe, that Abram began to fear he should not have an heir, but the LORD promised he should have a son, and that a very numerous race should proceed from him. Take particular notice, *ver. 6*, that *faith was counted to Abram for righteousness*; that is, he was regarded by GOD as a righteous man, because he firmly believed what the LORD had promised; but recollect also that this faith led him to obey the word of the LORD in all things. *Faith without works, says St. James, is dead. Chap. ii. ver. 20.*

Ver. 7, to the end. Observe, that GOD vouchsafed to make a solemn covenant with Abram. The ceremonies used on this occasion by Abram were probably such as were customary in those times in making covenants betwixt man and man; that is, when two people made a covenant they divided animals as Abram was directed to do, and walked between them, making at the same time a solemn promise to keep to their engagement. The vision of the burning lamp passing between the pieces, was a sign to Abram that the LORD actually entered into covenant with him. Observe, *ver. 13, 14*, what GOD foretold respecting the Egyptian bondage, and the deliverance of the people of Israel. *Ver. 15*, contains GOD's promise to Abram himself. *Ver. 16*, declares the time when the seed of Abram should return to the Land of Promise, and the reason why they were not to be put in possession of it before. Observe, the extent of the promised land, and the names of the idolatrous nations which were to be destroyed to make room for Abram's seed. From the words, *ver. 16, the iniquity of the Ammonites is not yet full*, we may learn that GOD does not entirely cut off wicked nations till they arrive at the highest pitch of iniquity.

CHAPTER XVI.

We may suppose that Abram, Sarai, and Hagar, having all lived in an idolatrous country, and having no holy scriptures to guide

guide them, acted contrary to the marriage law *through ignorance*. Observe that, though Sarai treated her maid *hardly*, the angel of the LORD directed Hagar to return and submit herself to her mistress. Take particular notice of the divine promise made to Hagar in *verses 10, 11*, concerning the son she was to have. Observe, *ver. 12*, what kind of a man Ishmael was to be; and that a great nation was to proceed from him. Hagar's words, *ver. 13*, show that the Divine Being, called *the Angel of the LORD*, was GOD. Abram testified his faith in GOD's promise to Hagar, by naming the child Ishmael.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. Observe, that the Divine Being who appeared to Abram, called himself the ALMIGHTY GOD, and that he renewed his covenant with Abram, and appointed *circumcision* as a sign, or token, to distinguish the posterity and family of Abram from the idolatrous nations. The word ABRAM, in the Hebrew language, signifies *high father*. ABRAHAM, signifies a *father of many nations*. SARAI, signified a *lady*. SARAH, a *princess*. Observe, that though it seemed scarcely possible to Abraham that he should have a son, he believed the promises of GOD, and testified his faith in the way which GOD had commanded.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 17. Abraham was only *seventy years* old when the LORD called him out of his own country, and from his own kindred, and promised to make of him a great nation; he was in his *hundredth year* when the LORD appeared to him in the plain of Mamre, and told him his son Isaac should be born in that year; yet Abraham's faith never failed. As the three angels appeared in the human form, Abraham took them for men, and showed hospitality to them as strangers. Observe, what the LORD said to Abraham, *ver. 13, 14*. Sarah denied her fault through fear, but she could not deceive the LORD; every false word is known of GOD, and exposes those who utter it to his displeasure.

Ver. 17 to 23. Abraham is called in the Prophecy of Isaiah, *chap. xli. ver. 8, the friend of GOD*; and so he is stiled in the *Epistle of St. James, chap. ii. ver. 23*; and in this chapter we find the LORD *talking to Abraham as one friend to another*, and acquainting him with his purpose respecting two great, but very wicked cities. Observe, also, *ver. 19*, on what account Abraham was so highly favoured. From *ver. 20*, we learn that Sodom and Gomorrah were arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness, the time for their destruction therefore was arrived. If God had not revealed his design of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah beforehand, the destruction might have been thought to have happened in the common course of nature, and not as a judgment from Heaven. Remember, that to follow the example of Abraham in respect to his children, is the sure way for parents to gain the favour of GOD both for themselves and their families.

Ver. 24 to the end. Observe, that Abraham interceded, that is, pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah, and the LORD hearkened to his intercession. We should learn from this to pray not only for the nation we belong to, but for all nations. Observe, that God would have spared these two cities at the intercession of Abraham, if there had been only *ten righteous people* in them. This should make all persons resolve to add to the number of righteous people in the city, or place they belong to, by their own righteousness, that they may do their part towards bringing the blessing of Heaven upon the nation, instead of adding to the measure of its wickedness. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah had corrupted themselves as much as the former inhabitants of the world who were destroyed by the flood; but GOD did not see fit to cut them off by the same means. Turn to *Ezekiel, chap. xvi ver. 40, 50*, and you will learn what the crimes were by which the people of Sodom provoked the LORD to destroy them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 24. Lot's hospitality to the two angels, whom he supposed to be travellers, shows him to have been a benevolent man. Observe the wickedness of the people of Sodom,

Sodom, and that Lot did not join with them. How uncomfortable, as well as dangerous, must it have been to a good man, to live among such wicked people, as St. Peter observes in his *Second Epistle*, chap. ii. ver. 6, 7, 8. Remark the goodness of GOD in sending two angels to deliver Lot from the destruction which was coming upon the other inhabitants of Sodom, and that, at his earnest prayer, the LORD spared the small city or town of Zoar, but that Lot was obliged to leave all his riches behind him.

Ver. 24 to the end. Consider, what a dreadful judgment it was by which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and how great the power of GOD is, who can make any part of the creation he pleases an instrument of his providence in any way, either for the benefit of the good, or the punishment of the wicked. From this event we see that GOD overlooks the world as it is divided among the different nations that inhabit it, and punishes or rewards each nation as he sees fit. Observe also, that the fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, fell only upon those cities which the LORD intended to destroy. Before this judgment was sent, the people of Sodom had had several warnings—they had been slaves to the King of Elam twelve years—they had had a grievous slaughter in the valley of Siddim (*see Gen. chap. xiv.*)—and righteous Lot had lived among them, and without doubt had frequently admonished them. Observe the punishment of Lot's wife, who looked behind her either with a wish to return contrary to the will of GOD, or because she did not believe the cities would be destroyed. Our Saviour, speaking of the destruction of the world at the last day said, *Remember Lot's wife*, *Luke xvii. 32.* Think how Abraham must have been affected with awe and reverence, when he beheld the smoke of the cities! Take particular notice of *ver. 29.* St. Jude, in his Epistle, says, that Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, *suffered the vengeance of eternal fire*, in his time; and several writers give nearly the same account down to the times of the Apostles, which was near 2000 years after the destruction of those cities. This should serve as a warning not only to wicked nations in respect to temporal judgments, but to every wicked person in respect to the dreadful punishment threatened in the New Testament, to all who lead wicked lives; and we should learn from the preservation of

Lot, that good people are always under the care of Providence.

What is related of Lot and his daughters at the end of this chapter, should teach us at all times to be upon our guard, and to avoid all temptations to sin, especially those of drunkenness and intemperance, which generally lead to other vices.

CHAPTER XX.

This chapter affords another proof that the best men are not perfect. It also shows that the knowledge of the true God was not quite lost in the country of which Abimelech was King. What is related here most probably happened at an earlier period of Abraham and Sarah's life. However it was, this chapter is one of those which do not require particular meditation. But we learn from it that Abraham was a prophet, that is, one to whom the LORD made known things that were to come to pass at a distant period, that through him they might be made known to the world.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 9. We have here an account of the fulfilment of the promises which God had made to Abraham and Sarah, that he would give them a son in their old age; and we find that Abraham's faith had in this instance its reward, though it pleased God to keep him for a number of years in expectation of it; from which we should learn to trust in the promises of God written in scripture. It was certainly a wonderful thing when the lives of mankind were so much shortened, that such aged people as Abraham and Sarah should have a child, and it was matter of great joy to them. The word *laugh*, *ver. 6*, signifies to rejoice.

Ver. 9 to 22. Isaac and Ishmael could not both have been heads of nations if they had continued together, and it was ordained of God, before either of them were born, that Isaac should be heir to the promises which God had made to Abraham, respecting the land of Canaan, and *the seed of the woman*
who

who was to bruise the serpent's head, and that Ishmael should be the head of another great nation; for this reason God commanded Abraham to hearken to the voice of his wife. When Abraham sent Ishmael and his mother away with only some bread and a bottle of water, he gave a proof of his faith in God's promises, by leaving those he loved to be provided for by Providence. If Abraham had not had such promises this would have been a very unnatural and barbarous action. Observe that Hagar's faith failed when she saw her child ready to perish. She had forgotten the promise which God had given her concerning Ishmael before he was born, *chap. xvi.* and those which had been made to Abraham, *chap. xvii.* which, in this chapter, no doubt, he told her of. But the Lord showed that he had not forsaken Ishmael though he had sent him away from his father's house: let us from this learn never to despair. Young people, in particular, who are obliged to leave their parents in order to get a livelihood, may take comfort from this part of Ishmael's history, as it proves that they may be under the protection and care of their heavenly Father in every place, and that God is ever ready to hear the prayer of those who call upon him in the time of their distress, and to help their necessities. Observe, that Ishmael did not live amongst other men in cities, or towns, following any of the usual occupations of life, but in a wilderness, where he maintained and defended himself by means of his bow and arrows; so that he was properly a *wild man*, as was foretold of him, *chap. xvi. ver. 12*, and he married a woman of the same country as his mother was of.

Ver. 22 to the end. These verses show that the people of God may make treaties and alliances for their security, and that they ought to keep them strictly. The grove Abraham planted at Beersheba, was for the purpose of divine worship, instead of a temple, or church. Afterwards, when the heathen nations had groves dedicated to their idols, the people of God were forbidden to worship him in groves. Observe, that Abraham had no settled dwelling in the promised land, he moved about from place to place as he found it necessary to do for his flocks and herds.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 15. The word *tempt*, in *verse 1*, signifies *try*, for God never tempts in any other sense. God put the faith of Abraham to the proof, by requiring him to offer his son for a burnt offering. The *17th, 18th, and 19th verses of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi.* show what belief supported Abraham's faith on this trying occasion, namely, that he *accounted that God was able to raise Isaac even from the dead.*

Ver. 8. Abraham spake prophetically, and his words were verified; *God did provide himself a lamb.* Abraham's offering up his son was a type of God's giving his son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as a sacrifice for mankind. Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac, was the place on which the house of the Lord at Jerusalem was afterwards built. We should learn from Abraham's example to be ready to submit to God's will in the most severe trials, and to trust always in his providence.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that though Abraham had done no more than his duty, the LORD graciously rewarded him. Take particular notice of the words of the solemn promise which the LORD confirmed at this time with an oath, *ver. 16, 17, 18*, and remember that the first part of the promise, in *ver. 17*, related to the great nation which was to proceed from Abraham according to God's promise made before, in *chap. xii. ver. 2*, and the latter part of it, in *ver. 18* of this chapter, to the MESSIAH, the SAVIOUR of the world, in whom alone *all the families of the earth were to be blessed.* Think how happy and comfortable Abraham must have returned home with his dear son Isaac! Remember, those will ever be made comfortable who obediently submit to the will of God.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Abraham's desire to bury his wife in the land of Canaan, showed his belief in the Divine promises, that God would
give

give that country to his posterity. He did not claim even a small spot of land, and a cave, for a burial place, as *his right*, for he knew he was not to possess the land himself, but to be a *stranger* and a *sojourner* in it; therefore he bought it of the people in whose possession it was at that time. In *St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. ver. 8, 9*, we read that Abraham placed his hopes upon an inheritance beyond the grave. Observe here, *ver. 6, 7*, with what respect the children of Heth addressed Abraham, and his courteous behaviour towards them: this should serve as an example in our dealings with mankind. When we would make a purchase of any kind, we should inform ourselves of its value, and be ready to pay it in a word, without endeavouring to over-reach one another. Neither should we desire to have as a gift what we ought to purchase.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, in the beginning of this chapter, how the LORD fulfilled to Abraham his divine promise that he would *blefs* him. Observe, also, Abraham's pious desire to procure a wife for his son among his own relations, lest he should marry a daughter of the Canaanites, who might have corrupted him as the daughters of Cain's posterity corrupted the descendants of Seth before the flood. The ceremony of *putting the hand under the thigh*, was the token then in use for those who took a solemn oath, as laying the hand upon the gospels now is.

Ver. 10 to 29. We may learn from the example of Abraham's servant to pray for God's blessing upon all honest undertakings, and to give praise and glory to God for success in them. Rebekah's example should teach us to be obliging to strangers and tender to animals. It was a great task to draw water for such a number of camels, for these creatures drink a vast deal at a time. Observe, *ver. 11*, that Abraham's servant was so careful of his master's cattle, that he would neither overdrive them or let them stand, but made them kneel down, (the posture in which these animals rest,) while he was praying to God.

Ver. 32 to 50. Observe, *ver. 32*, that before this good steward

steward entered the house, he released the poor beasts from their burthens and saw them fed. Remember that God provides food on purpose for beasts, as we read in the first chapter of Genesis; therefore it is a sin to starve them, and it is wicked to use them ill in any way. If there were no beasts, mankind must work much harder than they do, and they would be deprived of many pleasures which they now enjoy by means of brute creatures. Abraham's good servant resolved to do his master's business before he would take the least refreshment himself, after a fatiguing journey, by which he set an example of diligence and fidelity to all servants.

Verse 50 to the end. Observe Laban and Bethuel's answer, and their submission to the Divine will. Take notice, *ver. 52*, of the servant's piety in ascribing his success to Divine Providence, and his earnest desire to return and make his good master happy by the report of it. Observe, also, *ver. 60*, the blessing pronounced by the brother and mother of Rebekah at their parting, which shows that they believed a great nation would proceed from Abraham's family.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 7. Abraham sent the rest of his sons away to settle in other countries, that their posterity might not disturb the great nation that was to proceed from Isaac, by disputing with them the possession of any part of the promised land. No doubt Abraham acted in this matter by divine direction, as he had before in the case of Ishmael and Hagar.

Ver. 7, 8, to 11. Observe, *ver. 7, 8*, that the LORD's promise to Abraham, *chap. xv. ver. 15*, was fulfilled to him, but though he had great possessions, Abraham continued a sojourner upon earth, he was not a fixed inhabitant of any place all his days; from whence we may conclude that as he remained faithful he certainly had, after his death, an inheritance in that city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which the Apostle to the Hebrews says he looked for, *Hebrews, xi. ver. 9, 10*. Observe, that Isaac and Ishmael were in friendship together, which affords an example all brothers and sisters should follow.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe, that God's promises were fulfilled

fulfilled respecting Isaac and Ishmael; the first was *blessed in the land of Canaan*. The other was the *father of twelve princes*, as foretold, *chap. xvii. ver. 20*. Observe here, *ver. 27*, the different characters of Isaac's two sons as they grew to man's estate, and remember that it was ordained of God *before the children were born*, that the *elder should serve the younger*. This prediction, which is in *ver. 23*, related to the *nations* which were to proceed from Isaac's two sons, not to Jacob and Esau *themselves*. The two nations were the *Israelites* and the *Edomites*. The birthright which Esau despised and Jacob desired, was the *blessing of the LORD*, given first to Abraham, and afterwards to Isaac. See *chap. xv. &c.* If Esau had had faith in God's promises, he would have set a due value upon what he supposed to be his birthright. If Jacob had not believed them he would have been indifferent to them, but he was wrong in the means he took to obtain the blessing of the LORD. If God had not before ordained that the posterity of the *elder should serve the younger*, Jacob could not have obtained the birthright; nor, in fact, did Esau part with any thing he possessed, or Jacob obtain any thing he had not before, by the transactions between them. As we cannot but blame Jacob for taking advantage of his brother's necessities, we should be careful to avoid all such actions as will draw upon us the reproaches of our conscience.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe, that Isaac as well as Abraham lived an unsettled life, moving from place to place; indeed he was for many years more frequently obliged to change his abode than his father had been. Take particular notice of *ver. 4*, in which the *blessing*, formerly pronounced on Abraham, is promised to Isaac. Observe, in *ver. 5*, what the LORD said of Abraham, and remember that the families of those who serve and obey God, will be blessed for their parents' sakes. Observe, that Isaac dwelt for some time among the Philistines.

Ver. 7 to 28. It appears that Isaac brought both himself and his wife into danger, as Abraham had formerly done, by departing

departing from the truth. This should make us resolve to fear God rather than man. Observe, *ver. 13*, how graciously the Lord fulfilled his promise to Isaac; yet he sometimes met with adversity. For God tries all his faithful servants in turn, either to prove their obedience and faith, or to correct in them some faults which might deprive them of his favour. The stopping up of wells was a great injury, and the Philistines doing so by Isaac, showed they were very spiteful; besides it was cruel to the poor cattle, to deprive them of water which was not to be met with in all places in the eastern countries; and it is very cruel to take revenge upon poor beasts for the faults of their owners, of which they cannot be sensible.

Ver. 24. Observe how the LORD comforted Isaac under the ill treatment he met with, by repeating his gracious promise. Observe, also, that Isaac testified his constant regard to God's worship, by raising altars for sacrifice wherever he took up his abode, by which he showed his constant regard to the true religion. The place where the altars were raised, were consecrated to the LORD, by which it was made a place for public worship.

Ver. 28 to the end. What Abimelech and his chief captain said to Isaac, *ver. 28*, shows that it was evident, even to the idolaters, that the LORD bestowed an extraordinary blessing upon Isaac. Observe, *ver. 34*, that Esau took wives from one of those heathen nations which were in process of time to be cut off to make room for the Israelites. See *chap. xv. ver. 20*. This shows that he was not a proper person to be the head of that nation which was to have the *peculiar blessing of the LORD*, and to keep up the true religion in the world.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 30. Recollect what is said of Isaac's and Rebekah's partiality to their sons, *chap. 25, ver. 28*, and observe what faults it led each of them into. Isaac wished to convey to his favourite the blessing of the LORD, without praying for divine direction; Rebekah put her favourite upon obtaining it by deceit. Jacob, in obedience to his mother, acted
against

against his own conscience. Our reason will show us that these are not things in which we should imitate Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob; therefore no remarks are made upon them by the sacred writer of their history. What we are particularly to observe here, is, that GOD made the faults of these three persons contribute to bring about his own good purposes. GOD knew beforehand what they would do; he knew also that Jacob, though he would do many wrong things, would keep from idol worship, and reverence his Creator, and bring up his family in the true religion; and that Esau on the contrary would marry idolaters, and depart from the right way; and GOD, possibly, for this reason, ordained that Jacob rather than Esau should be the head of the great nation through which all the families of the earth should be blessed. When Isaac pronounced the blessing he was inspired; he spoke not his own words, but what THE LORD put into his mouth.

Observe the words of the blessing, *ver. 27, 28, 29*, which show that it related to Jacob's *posterity*, the nation that was to proceed from him not to *himself*, and it was afterwards fulfilled in the great power and prosperity of the House of Israel.

Ver. 30 to 41. Observe, that Isaac was greatly affected when he found he had acted contrary to the will of the LORD, in desiring to give the blessing to Esau. It was in vain for Esau to repent of his having despised the birthright when the *blessing of the LORD* was confirmed to his brother. As Christians, we should take warning by Esau's example not to despise *our* birthright, *the inheritance provided for us in the kingdom of heaven*, lest we lose it as he did. Observe the words of the blessing pronounced on Esau by divine inspiration, *ver. 39, 40.* This prediction was fulfilled many years after by the power of the Edomites, the nation that proceeded from Esau, who was also called Edom.

Ver. 41 to the end. Esau's hatred to his brother shows that he was not a religious man; if he had been so, he would have submitted to the will of GOD in this matter, and not have hated his brother. No provocation can justify hatred to a brother. Observe, also, that Jacob and Rebekah gained nothing by practising deceit; on the contrary, they brought sorrow upon themselves immediately. The mother could

no longer enjoy the company of her darling son ; Jacob's brother hated him, and he was obliged to leave his native home, and turn into the wide world to seek his fortune ; and it does not appear that Rebekah ever saw her son Jacob afterwards. The punishment of Jacob and Rebekah should make us resolve to act fairly and uprightly, and on no account to practise deceit.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that Isaac was desirous of making amends for his former fault, by praying to God to confirm the blessing to Jacob. Take notice, *ver. 4*, what this blessing was. It must have been a great punishment to Jacob, who was a *plain man, dwelling in tents*, that is, one who liked to lead a quiet domestic life, to be obliged to go from home as a wanderer, with nothing he could call his own, except the staff in his hand. Israel's charge to him at parting showed his faith in the Divine Promises, which probably occasioned his casting Jacob so entirely on Divine Providence.

Ver. 10 to 18. Observe that, though the LORD saw fit that Jacob should suffer for his faults, yet as his faith was perfect, he did not forsake him, but comforted him by a glorious vision, *ver. 12*, in which he gave to him the blessing of Abraham. Compare the words of this blessing, *ver. 13, 14*, with *chap. xii. ver. 2, 3*. Remark also, the promise of the LORD to Jacob, *ver. 15*. This part of scripture shows that God is present in all places ; and that, though as a father the LORD chastises his children for their faults, he does not forsake those who love and honour him. The poorest person upon earth is an object of God's care, if his faith and piety be sincere.

Ver. 8 to the end. Observe, *ver. 10*, that Jacob asked nothing for himself but the common necessities of life, and to return to his father's home in peace. The expression, to have *the LORD for his God*, signified, that he would keep to the worship of the true God, in his own appointed way, and not worship idols. We, as Christians, should take example from him, remembering that *our Father's house*, to which all our desires should be directed, is *Heaven*. The word *Bethel*,

signifies the house of God. Observe, likewise, that it was part of Jacob's solemn vow that he would devote the tenth of his substance to the LORD; or in other words, give tithes of his substance for the support of religion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Observe that GOD prospered Jacob's journey, and brought him safe to the house of his mother's brother, and that Jacob was willing to work for his livelihood rather than be chargeable to his relations. The having more wives than one, was contrary to the original marriage law, but probably Jacob was ignorant of this law, as there were no scriptures at that time. Idolatry had spread greatly in the world, and introduced many wrong customs, which well-meaning people fell into through ignorance.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 27. Observe that Jacob had a great number of children born to him, so that he had reason to believe the promises of GOD to Abraham, Isaac, and himself, concerning a numerous posterity, would certainly be accomplished; but in such a mixed family there were frequent disagreements, and Jacob was not so comfortable as he might have been if he had had but one wife, and all his children the same mother.

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe the reason which Laban gave for not wishing to part with Jacob, and Jacob's reason, *ver. 33*, for desiring that cattle of certain descriptions only might be appointed as his hire. Observe, also, that Jacob's prosperity increased greatly according to GOD's gracious promise, *chap. xxviii. ver. 15*. What Jacob did with a view to increase his cattle most probably was by GOD's command, as a *sign* that he believed it was by *the blessing of the LORD* and not by *chance*, that the cattle had young ones of the kinds appointed for his wages. Laban could not hinder the purposes of Divine Providence towards Jacob; neither could Jacob himself make *one hair* of the cattle *white* or *black*. No

one can be rich or prosperous in the world contrary to the will of GOD; neither can any one become poor without GOD's permission.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 22. Observe that GOD had graciously given Jacob much more than he prayed for at Bethel, the night he left his native home; and he longed to return to *his father's house in peace* after twenty years absence; besides the jealousy of Laban's sons must have made his abode amongst them very uncomfortable, yet he did not think of going back to Canaan till the Lord commanded him, *ver. 13.*

Ver. 22 to 36. Observe, *ver. 29,* how Laban was restrained from hurting Jacob. It was without Jacob's knowledge that Rachel took her father's images: by living in a heathen land, she had learnt to worship idols, though she appears to have believed in the LORD GOD.

Ver. 36 to the end. Observe what hardships Jacob had suffered in Laban's service, and that Laban could not lay any crime to his charge. The covenant made between Laban and Jacob, shows that Laban believed in the true GOD, and that sacrifices continued to be offered by the worshippers of the LORD.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 24. The vision of angels, *ver. 1,* with which Jacob was favoured, was a great encouragement to him to proceed on his journey; yet even this did not quiet his fears respecting Esau, because his conscience told him he had wronged his brother. Observe how anxious he was to be reconciled to Esau, and the piety and humility of his prayer to GOD, *ver. 9, 10, 11, 12.* Observe, also, that Jacob did not show any design to set himself up above his brother, though the divine blessing had been confirmed to him, but called himself *his servant*, in his message to Esau, *ver. 18, 20.*

Ver. 24 to the end. This passage of scripture cannot be well explained now; but without doubt Jacob's descendants, the Israelites,

Israelites, for whom the Bible was first written, perfectly understood it. All we need remark is, that a *new name* was given to Jacob, *ver.* 28, which signifies a *prince with God*. This is certain, that something very extraordinary took place betwixt Jacob and an angel, and that it was intended for some very important purpose.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Observe that when Esau set out from home he took four hundred men with him; this shows that he still bore resentment against his brother; he thought perhaps that Jacob was coming to set himself against him, but God hearkened to Jacob's prayer, which he had offered up, and turned the heart of Esau, so that when he met him, he was melted into kindness by the submissive behaviour of Jacob, and the sight of his numerous family, all relations of his own. Both Jacob and Esau set a good example on this occasion; the one in doing all he could to make amends for a fault, and the other in forgiving an injury. Seir, to which Esau retired, was at some distance from Canaan. Jacob purchased a piece of land in Canaan for the purpose of building an altar. The word *El-elohi-Israel*, signifies, God, *the God of Israel*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The shocking things related in this chapter show that it is dangerous for young women to go about by themselves, and make acquaintance with strangers; and that those people who give way to revenge often commit cruel and unjust actions. Jacob by no means approved of what Simeon and Levi had done; his wish was rather to gain a good reputation among the people of the land by fair and upright dealing.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1 to 9. Jacob knew not what place to go to after his sons had behaved so basely in the land of Shechem. Ob-

serve, *ver.* 1, what it pleased GOD to direct him to do—also, *ver.* 3, 4, what means Jacob took to put an end to idolatry in his family, and to fix all belonging to it in the worship of the only true GOD; and *ver.* 5, how GOD prevented the people of the land from coming out against them. By *the terror of the Lord*, is to be understood that fear and dread which GOD sometimes sends upon the enemies of his people, to keep them from doing the harm they would otherwise do them. If the idolatrous nations had not been filled with this fear, they would have revenged themselves upon Jacob and the other innocent persons in his family, for what two of his sons had done to the Shechemites. Recollect what Jacob did, and what vow he made when GOD appeared to him the night he left his father's house, at the place he then named Beth-el, *chap.* xxviii. *ver.* 18, 19, &c. and observe, in this chapter, how Jacob fulfilled this vow.

Ver. 9 to 16. Observe how exactly these verses agree with GOD's promises to Abraham and Isaac, as well as with those to Jacob himself. What Jacob did in respect to anointing the pillar, and making offerings, was in order to consecrate that particular spot as a place of worship, by which he fulfilled that part of his former vow, which is in the twenty-second *verse of the xxviiiith chapter.*

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe, *ver.* 18, that at the same time GOD showed such favour to Jacob, he suffered some heavy afflictions to fall upon him; the loss of his beloved wife, Rachel, was a very severe one, and he was frequently obliged to change his habitation, which shows that the patriarchs had no settlement in the land of Canaan, nor any happiness secured to them upon earth, their rest and their inheritance were in Heaven, as St. Paul observes, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, *chap.* xi. *ver.* 14, &c. Observe, at the latter end of this chapter, the names of Jacob's twelve sons. Also how the LORD graciously fulfilled his promise made to Jacob, *chap.* xxviii. *ver.* 15, for he was with him in all places wheresoever he went; and brought him again into his native land. So that Jacob not only had the three blessings he desired, *chap.* xxviii. *ver.* 20, but abundance of riches besides;—see his prayer, *chap.* xxxii. *ver.* 9, 10. Observe that Isaac lived to a good old age; but there is no mention made of Rebekah,

we may therefore conclude that she died whilst Jacob was at *Padan-aram*.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

This chapter gives the genealogy of Esau's posterity. Observe, what is said, *ver. 7*, and remember that *Esau* was also called *Edom*, and that the people who descended from him were called *Edomites*. Observe, also, that Jacob and Esau were in friendship with each other, neither did Jacob pretend to rule over Esau. This shows that what the LORD had made known concerning the *younger ruling over the elder*, related to the *nations*, or *people*, who were to proceed from them, and not to Jacob and Esau *themselves*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The history of Joseph begins in this chapter, in which you should remark, as you proceed, the clear proofs it affords of a particular Providence, by which all things are made to work together for good to those who love God.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe that God, by means of two prophetic dreams, foretold to Joseph that he would become a very great governor, and that his brethren should bow down to him; and that Joseph had these dreams just before very heavy calamities fell upon him. He might be a little set up perhaps by his father's making a favourite of him, yet Joseph showed love for his brethren by taking so much pains to find them.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe that by giving way to envy and jealousy, Joseph's brethren were led on to commit great crimes; they were very hard-hearted and unnatural towards their innocent brother, and very cruel and undutiful to their aged parent; the things they plotted against Joseph must have been suggested by the devil. Reuben, who was more kindly disposed towards Joseph than the rest, was the means of saving his life; and the Midianitish merchants, though they knew it not, executed the purpose of God, by taking Joseph into Egypt. If Reuben had been absent at the time, or the mer-

chants had not arrived just as they did, Joseph would have been murdered; this appeared like *chance*, but it was so ordained by Providence. God saw fit that Joseph should endure various trials before his advancement. It is by means of trials and afflictions that the best people are prepared for their future advancement to the glory of the kingdom of Heaven. Parents should remember that Jacob was severely chastised for showing partiality to one of his children above the rest.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

This chapter relates to some very irregular conduct in Jacob's sons, which every true Christian must abhor, as contrary to the pure laws of the gospel.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Observe that though Joseph was sold for a slave, he fell into the hands of a good master, whose confidence he soon gained by his faithful and wise conduct; and that, when, by the false accusation of a wicked woman, he was thrown into prison, God graciously disposed the heart of the keeper of the prison to show kindness to him; so that even in this dismal place he found an honourable situation. Any one would have thought Joseph's case was desperate, when he was sold by his unnatural brethren to strangers who dealt in the traffic of human kind, and who bought him with no other view than to sell him for a slave; and little could Joseph expect that in his jailor he should find a friend, but the good providence of God attended him wherever he went. By his behaviour, in respect to Potiphar's wife, and in his fidelity as a servant, Joseph set an excellent example; to which young men should pay great attention, and imprint on their mind his pious reply to the wicked intreaties of his mistress, *ver. 9, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* especially in these times when adultery is so openly countenanced.

CHAPTER XL.

Observe Joseph's words, *ver. 8*, which show that we ought not to believe in books which pretend to *give rules* for the *interpretation of dreams*. Joseph professed to speak by the inspiration of God, when he interpreted the dreams of the chief butler and baker, not by any art he was acquainted with. The thing happening according to Joseph's interpretation, must have caused him to be regarded in the prison as an extraordinary person, but it was the will of God that he should continue some time longer in adversity. It was very ungrateful in the chief butler to forget his friend; but the following chapter shows that God intended greater things for Joseph in due time, from which we learn that when God appears slow in delivering his servants, it is with a view to their good in some way or other; the reward may possibly be delayed even till the next life, but it will certainly be bestowed.

CHAPTER XLI.

Ver. 1 to 17. Observe that none of the wise men of Egypt, though renowned for their learning and wisdom all over the east, could interpret Pharaoh's dreams. This shows, as Joseph observed, that *interpretations belong to God alone*; it is therefore presumptuous for any *man* or *woman* to attempt to give an interpretation of any dream, unless inspired by God, as Joseph undoubtedly was. Common dreams have no signification at all, and it is much to be doubted whether such dreams as Pharaoh's are ever sent, now that the will of God, and the ways of Providence, are so fully made known in the Scriptures.

Ver. 17 to 46. Pharaoh's dreams clearly show that all things are foreknown to God, and that fruitful or unfruitful seasons are ordered by his over-ruling Providence. Such an instance of divine favour leads us to conclude that the Egyptians at this time had a good king, who still feared the Lord God, though idolatry had found its way into Egypt, and he and Joseph were made joint instruments of God's Providence,

dence, for preserving the lives of multitudes, who, not thinking of approaching famine, might have wasted the over-abundance of the seven fruitful years.

Ver. 45 to the end. Observe that Joseph showed himself worthy of the great trust reposed in him, for he did every thing that a wise and good governor ought to do under such circumstances, and by his conduct set an excellent example. The priest of On, whose daughter Joseph married, we may suppose was a priest who offered sacrifices to the LORD GOD, in whom Pharaoh believed. Observe that Joseph's misfortunes were by the providence of GOD made the means of his advancement to that dignity which GOD had ordained he should be raised to; and if we take notice of the things which happen to ourselves, in the course of our lives, we may be able, from the history of Joseph, to perceive the hand of Providence working for our good, both in prosperity and in adversity, whilst we truly love GOD.

CHAPTER XLII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe here the providence of GOD taking care of good old Jacob; and that Joseph's brethren, without thinking of such a thing, now fulfilled the prophetic dreams sent so long before from GOD, and at which they took offence when Joseph innocently related them.

Ver. 7 to 29. Observe the method which Joseph employed to try whether his brethren were as wicked as they had formerly been, and to find out whether his father and his brother Benjamin were living. What his brethren said to each other, *ver. 21, 22*, in their distress, shows how the consciences of those who sold Joseph accused them. How comfortable must it have been to Reuben to be conscious that he had tried to deliver Joseph out of their hands. Observe that Joseph felt great kindness towards his brethren, notwithstanding their ill treatment, and that, although from prudence and discretion he spoke *roughly* to them, he supplied their wants and returned them their money; if he had not detained one of his brethren, probably the others would not have returned and brought Benjamin.

Ver. 29 to the end. Jacob's distress was very great, but it was soon

soon to be followed with unlooked-for happiness. He thought all those things that happened were *against him*, when Providence was making them work together for his good; this is often the case with pious persons in time of distress; but the history of Jacob teaches them to think differently of the apparent misfortunes of life.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe that though Jacob in the first agony of his mind said *Benjamin should not go down into Egypt*, yet when he had time for reflection he resigned himself to the will of God, resolving to bear every evil that might fall upon himself, rather than bring distress upon his family.

Ver. 15 to 31. Observe that Joseph's brethren acted very honestly in respect to the money they had found in their sacks; also Joseph's kindness to his brethren when they addressed him as the unknown Governor of Egypt. His inquiries after his father, and the tender emotions he showed at the sight of his brother Benjamin, were sure signs of his being a good man.

Ver. 31 to the end. Observe that when Joseph was Governor of Egypt, he did not follow the customs of the Egyptians, who were idolaters, but kept to those of his father's house. Christians should learn from his example to keep true and steady to the good principles they have been brought up in. Young persons who have had a religious education are often placed in very dangerous situations, for it is difficult to get them into religious families. When this is unfortunately the case, they should resolve to let no one draw them away from their duty, and they should pray frequently and earnestly to God to keep them, by his grace and goodness, from all temptations and dangers. It was natural for Joseph to have a partiality for Benjamin, as he was the son of his own mother.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe that by stopping Benjamin as he did, Joseph had an opportunity of discovering the true character of his brethren, and he had the comfort to find that they behaved in a very different manner when they thought Benjamin was going into slavery, to what they had done when they sold Joseph; which proved that distress had brought them to a proper sense of their crimes.

Ver. 14 to the end. Read with attention Judah's address to Joseph when he talked of detaining Benjamin, and observe what tenderness of heart and what dutiful regard he had for the happiness of his aged father. This behaviour of Judah affords an excellent lesson to all who have either parents, or brothers and sisters. It is a dreadful thing indeed for either a son or daughter, by unkindness to their aged parents, to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

CHAPTER XLV.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe with what tenderness and meekness Joseph made himself known to his brethren, comforting them instead of reproaching them, and that he acknowledged all things to have happened to him by the appointment of Providence for the preservation of Jacob and his family. Not that this took away the guilt of his brethren, their intentions had been wicked, though God graciously made their actions productive of good; but it softened the resentment of Joseph.

Ver. 9 to 16. Observe Joseph's great tenderness for his father, and his earnest desire to see him, and what strong affection he entertained for his brethren after all their cruel treatment of him.

Ver. 16 to the end. Pharaoh's directions concerning Joseph's family, shows that Joseph was a good governor and in high favour with the King. The land of Goshen was at that time unoccupied, and it was exactly fitted for the family of Jacob; and here they might dwell as a separate people, following
their

their own customs, and worshipping their own God, without offence to the Egyptians, or annoyance from them. Observe Joseph's charge to his brethren, *ver. 24*. Think what surprise and joy Jacob must have felt when he heard his long lost son was living, and governor of Egypt, and adore the ways of Providence!

CHAPTER XLVI.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe that Jacob, though so kindly invited by Joseph, and very anxious to see him, would not leave the land of Canaan, which was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and himself, for their posterity, till he had God's permission. Take particular notice of God's command and promise to him in these verses, and recollect what God said to Abraham so many years before, *Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 13, 14*; and how wonderfully every thing conspired to bring about the purposes of the Almighty in respect to *Abraham's seed going into Egypt*. Jacob showed his faith and submission to Providence by leaving the land of Canaan to go into Egypt. Remember that it was a *benefit*, not a *punishment*, to Jacob and his family at that time to go down into Egypt; for by removing they were delivered from the effects of famine, and blessed with plenty.

Ver. 8 to 28. Observe that Jacob's family at that time consisted of seventy persons, and that every one of his sons had children. So here was a prospect of their multiplying into a nation.

Ver. 28 to the end. Observe in these verses how good old Jacob was rewarded for all his former sorrows, which should encourage all pious persons who meet with trials and afflictions to put their trust in God, who will in his own good time deliver them, and make them taste of joy and gladness.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Ver. 1 to 13. Pharaoh's kind reception of Jacob and his sons, was another mark of the Divine blessing. When Jacob, *ver. 9*, said his days had been *few and evil*, he was 130 years old;

old; but what are these years to eternity? Observe, that Jacob called his life *a pilgrimage*, or *long journey*, which shows that he had another country in view. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, chap. xi. ver. 8 to 17, shows what country this was. Christians have such a pilgrimage to take, and their hopes and views should be directed to the same heavenly country.

Ver. 13 to 27. Observe with what prudence and equity Joseph divided the land of Egypt among the people, giving them back four fifths of the land when their distresses had occasioned them to give all into the King's hands; and what an advantage it was to the people themselves that they submitted their concerns to his management, instead of wasting the corn, as they most probably would have done in the years of plenty, and been clamorous for a supply in the years of scarcity. It is certainly a great trial to poor people when bread is scarce and dear, but they never mend their condition by impatience; whereas when they behave with respect to their superiors, and submit quietly to their governors, they are sure to meet with friends to help them in the time of necessity. What a sad state thousands would have been in if the Egyptians had gone and burnt the granaries in which the corn was laid up, instead of complying with Joseph's good rules and regulations.

Ver. 27 to the end. Jacob's earnest desire to be buried in the land of Canaan, shows that he firmly believed God's promises respecting his posterity would be fulfilled, namely, that they would become a great nation, go out of Egypt, and possess the land of Canaan.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe that Joseph brought his two sons to his dying father, that they might receive his blessing. If Jacob had not adopted them into his family, his other sons might afterwards have refused to admit them into the land of Canaan, on account of their having been born in Egypt.

Ver. 15 to the end. By the angel which redeemed him from all evil, ver. 16, Jacob meant not a created angel certainly, but the ANGEL of the LORD, the LORD GOD, who appeared

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who said to Abraham, **I AM THE ALMIGHTY GOD**, *chap. xvii. ver. 1.* Observe, that Jacob's prayer exactly agreed with the Divine promises. In placing Ephraim, who was the younger, before Manasseh, who was the elder, Jacob must have acted by divine inspiration, for he could not have been able to foretell by any other means that the people, or nation, proceeding from the one, would be greater and more powerful than those proceeding from the other. Observe Jacob's prophetic words, *ver. 21*, and his legacy to Joseph, *ver. 22.*

CHAPTER XLIX.

Ver. 1 to 29. Observe that before Jacob departed this world he was inspired to utter prophecies concerning the tribes which were to proceed from his twelve sons, and that he reproached some of his sons for their evil deeds. It is not material for us to understand these prophecies exactly, because they related solely to the sons of Jacob, and their descendants, the tribes of Israel. All we need remember respecting them is, that *Judah* was to be reckoned the *first of the tribes*, because from him the Messiah, who, in *ver. 10*, is called *Shiloh*, was to proceed.

Ver. 29 to the end. Take notice that it was Jacob's last request to *be buried in Canaan*. This shows that he fully depended upon his descendants having in time that country as their own peculiar possession. Think what a surprizing history Jacob's is, and how truly the Divine promise was fulfilled to him, *that God would be with him in all places whithersoever he went*. This should encourage us to put a firm trust in the mercy of God, who will assuredly be with us in like manner at all times, and in all places, if we love him with all our hearts, and keep his commandments.

CHAPTER L.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe how tenderly affected Joseph was by the death of his father, and the great care he took to fulfil the dying request of his venerable parent. Observe, also, that
Joseph's

Joseph's brethren joined cordially with him in paying the last duties to their father. By *embalming*, is meant using spices and perfumes to preserve dead bodies from corruption; this was practised in Egypt as an honour to the deceased.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe how kindly Joseph behaved to his brethren. They had no real cause to suspect he would take revenge upon them after his father's death, but it was their own consciences which told them they deserved it. It appears that Joseph enjoyed many years of prosperity and affluence after his trials were ended, and lived to a good old age, and at last died a happy death, looking for further blessings in the world to come. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, chap. xi. ver. 22, teaches us that it was faith in the Divine promises, that made Joseph desire his bones to be carried out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, which request was afterwards partly fulfilled by Moses, and completed by Joshua.

Having finished the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, we should reflect upon the *providence of God*, which was so wonderfully displayed in the various circumstances of their lives. It is very plain that nothing happened by chance to them; every thing was ordered either for their encouragement, chastisement, or reward; and the case is the same with every human being, though the hand of God is not now so visibly displayed; but by studying the *Holy Scriptures*, in which the manner of God's dealings is shown in various instances, we may understand a great deal of what happens to ourselves. Thus much at least we may learn from the histories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, that circumstances which at the time cause great affliction, are probably designed as the means of future prosperity, and that God can at all times bring good out of evil, and will assuredly reward those who trust to his promises. Who could have thought that a slave, in a strange country, would be the instrument for bringing about the purposes of God respecting his *chosen people*, who were to become the greatest nation upon earth? or that Joseph should have been, by his wise counsels, the means of saving the country into which he was sold.

EXODUS.

THE word *Exodus*, signifies *going forth*. This book is so named because it begins with the history of the going forth of the children of Israel from Egypt. It contains the history of what happened to the Israelites from the death of Joseph to the setting up of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and takes in the space of about 140 years.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe in these verses how the LORD's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respecting the multiplying of their posterity, were fulfilled.

Ver. 8 to 11. In the days of Joseph the Israelites, as being his relations, were greatly esteemed in Egypt both by king and people, but the case was now altered; they had multiplied, and the new king was jealous lest they should get the better of his subjects and cast off his authority. The Pharaoh, here mentioned, is supposed to have conquered Egypt about sixty years after the death of Joseph.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe here the accomplishment of what was foretold to Abraham many years before, in *Genesis*, chap. xv. ver. 13. The people of Israel now began to be afflicted in a land which was not theirs, and became servants to the Egyptians. These afflictions were intended to make them willing to leave a country whose people were very much given up to idolatry, and to draw them to the God of their fathers, the only true God, whom, by mixing so long with idolaters, they had nearly forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 11. LEVI was one of the sons of Jacob; his family was afterwards called *the tribe of Levi*. Observe that GOD having appointed a great work for Moses to do, would not suffer the cruel king of Egypt to defeat his purposes, but made Pharaoh's own daughter, who was of a very different disposition from her father, the instrument of his providence, and so ordered events that Moses was brought up by his own mother. The Apostle to *the Hebrews*, chap. xi. ver. 23, says, that it was *faith* which led the parents of Moses to expose him in an ark of bulrushes. It is not unlikely that GOD had revealed to them that Moses should be an extraordinary person, as he afterwards did in respect to Samson.

Ver. 11 to 23. Moses considered the people of Israel as his brethren, and the Egyptians as their oppressors. The Israelites were called *Hebrews* by the Egyptians, perhaps because they spoke the Hebrew language; the Egyptians used the people of Israel very barbarously. There was no law to protect them, or it would not have been right for Moses to take upon himself to revenge the wrongs of one of his brethren. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, chap. xi. ver. 24, informs us why Moses *rather chose to suffer persecution with the people of Israel than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. Reul, called also *Jethro*, was a priest to the LORD, though he lived in a country where idols were worshipped. If he had been priest to an idol, Moses would not have married his daughter.

Ver. 23 to the end. Recollect what the covenant was which GOD made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the promise that he would deliver their seed out of the strange land in which they should be slaves for four hundred years. *Genesis*, chap. xv. ver. 13, 14.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe that the same Divine Being, who is here called the ANGEL OF THE LORD, was no less
than

than the LORD GOD himself, as we may learn from his own words, *ver.* 6. Take particular notice of the gracious words which the LORD spake concerning the people of Israel, and that he was disposing every thing for their deliverance, and for putting them in possession of the promised land, while they were groaning in misery, and weighed down by oppression.

Ver. 9 to the end. The cruelty of the Egyptians was not disregarded by the LORD GOD, neither was the Almighty unmindful of the cries of the people of Israel, the seed of his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: he was now going to judge or bring judgments upon *that nation which afflicted them*, and to bring out his people with great substance, as he had promised to do. Observe, *ver.* 12, how graciously the LORD encouraged Moses, knowing that his refusal proceeded from infirmity. Observe the NAME by which the LORD GOD chose to be called, *ver.* 14, to distinguish him from the false gods of the heathen. The name I AM, can suit none but GOD himself, as it signifies the eternal GOD, the author of all being, who is the same from everlasting and world without end. The Lord's comfortable message to the Elders of Israel, and what he said respecting Pharaoh, *ver.* 19, shew that GOD knew all that Pharaoh would do and say beforehand, and that he had determined in his mercy and goodness to deliver the people of Israel notwithstanding all that Pharaoh would do to prevent their departure.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 18. In order to encourage Moses to go willingly, the LORD wrought a miracle before his face, and even upon his person, and promised to work other miracles, as proofs that he had really sent him with messages to the Elders of Israel, and to Pharaoh King of Egypt. Remember that a miracle is the changing the order of nature in any way, which none but the CREATOR can possibly do. Think of the difference which there is betwixt a rod or piece of stick, and a living serpent, and the difference betwixt a healthy member, and one covered with a loathsome disease, and how

wonderful it was to see these changes take place instantly at the word of the LORD. Observe, that these miracles were to be wrought to prove to the people and to Pharaoh, that Moses came with a mission from GOD. Take notice of the LORD's words to Moses, *ver. 11*, and consider that nothing is too difficult for GOD to do. Observe, *ver. 15, 16*, that Aaron was to be joined in the mission with Moses,—that Moses was to receive commands immediately from GOD, and repeat them to Aaron instead of GOD's speaking to Aaron himself; and Aaron was to speak as Moses directed him. Observe, also, that the rod which had been turned into a serpent, was in future to be called the *Rod of GOD*, as it was to be stretched out whenever a miracle was wrought.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that when Moses was fully convinced it was the will of GOD he should go into Egypt, he went willingly, and GOD graciously promised to enable him to execute his purpose. Remember that by the LORD's saying, *See that thou doest all these wonders*, nothing more is meant than that Moses should stretch out his rod with faith, or a firm belief that the miracle would be wrought; and that then the LORD would work the miracle. Observe, *ver. 22*, the honourable title which GOD gave to the people of Israel, calling them his *first born*, because theirs was the first nation he took into covenant with himself. Observe also, the LORD's threatening to Pharaoh, and that the LORD commanded Aaron to go and meet Moses, that Moses informed Aaron of every particular, and Aaron spake to the people the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and did the signs, that is, stretched out the rod, and the miracles followed. Observe also, how the people of Israel were affected when they heard GOD's message, and saw the miracles which confirmed the truth of it.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 19. Pharaoh, who was an abominable idolater, *desied the LORD*, and *refused to obey his voice*, as the LORD had foretold to Moses, *chap. iii. ver. 19*. This was presumptuous sin. His treatment of the Israelites after Moses and Aaron had delivered the LORD's message, showed that he was

not only of a most cruel tyrannical disposition, but that he set himself against the LORD.

Ver. 19 to the end. It was very wrong in the people of Israel, and in Moses also, to be so disheartened, because the promised deliverance did not take place immediately ; but this was excused in them, because it proceeded from their ignorance of the ways of Providence, owing to their living so long in an idolatrous country, where they had nearly lost the religion of their fathers, and probably become idolaters themselves. We may learn from this lesson that God makes allowance for sins of ignorance and weakness ; but we should also observe that the Israelites added greatly to their distress by not depending upon the promises of God.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 14. The LORD pitying the ignorance of his people, instead of punishing them for their want of trust and confidence in his holy word, promised to begin the work of their deliverance immediately according to the covenant he had before made with their forefathers, and also to convince them by signs and wonders that he was the only true God, and a God of mercy, truth, and goodness. Observe, that it was from *anguish of spirit*, and *cruel bondage*, that the Israelites hearkened not to Moses, and not from presumptuous wickedness like Pharaoh. God brought no plagues upon Pharaoh till he had been guilty of presumptuous sin. Pharaoh had said, *Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice*, before the LORD said to Moses, *now thou shalt see what I will do unto Pharaoh, &c.*

Ver. 16 to the end. These verses contain the genealogy of Moses and Aaron, which is here put down, because they were persons of great consequence, and became afterwards the priests ; and other ministers of religion were taken from the family of Levi, to which they belonged.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 8. The LORD would not speak to Pharaoh himself because he was so very wicked, but sent messages to him by Moses, and as Moses was diffident of himself Aaron was to speak for him. Remember that *hardness of heart* is the punishment GOD inflicts upon presumptuous sinners—that is, GOD takes away from such wicked persons the help of the Holy Spirit. But remember, also, that Pharaoh had said before GOD inflicted this punishment upon him, that *he would not obey the voice of the LORD by letting Israel go*; and he had treated the Israelites worse than before because the LORD called them his people. The LORD therefore resolved to make an example of Pharaoh, and to show in him his dealings with presumptuous sinners. Observe, *ver. 5*, that the LORD had resolved to prove to the Egyptians that *he is the only true GOD, the LORD of heaven and earth*.

Ver. 8 to 14. It was to confirm the truth of the mission of Moses and Aaron, and to convince Pharaoh and the Egyptians of his almighty power, that the LORD promised to work miracles in the sight of Pharaoh. The Egyptians amongst other reptiles worshipped the serpent, and the LORD caused the rods of the magicians to become serpents as well as the rod of Aaron, to give them a sign that as Aaron's rod had swallowed up their rods, so would the LORD GOD destroy the idols of Egypt, and that Moses was his minister. Observe that it was not by the power of those who cast down the rod the miracle was wrought, but by the power of GOD, who alone can change the nature of any of his creatures. But we find Pharaoh formed a wrong judgment of this miracle; he supposed that the magicians and Moses had equal power to turn rods into serpents. Thus the very miracle which would have satisfied a good person only hardened Pharaoh's heart. GOD suffered him to be deceived because he set the magicians up against his minister Moses. In *chap. iii. ver. 8*, of *St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy*, we have the names of the magicians who withstood Moses, and are told what kind of persons they were, and what their crime was. Remember that *resisting the truth* is a presumptuous sin.

Ver.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, that none but the CREATOR could change *water* into *blood*. The magicians could do no more in this instance than in the former one ; they stretched forth their rods, as Aaron did the rod of GOD, and Pharaoh was again deceived ; not having the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT to give him a right judgment, but following the suggestions of the devil, he attributed the miracle to the power of men, and his heart grew still harder. The Egyptians were particularly distressed by the water being turned into blood, and by the killing of the fish, because they were accustomed to bathe and wash very frequently, and fed chiefly upon fish. Consider what a dreadful plague this was, and what a blessing it is to have plenty of good water, and how thankful we ought to be to GOD that he gives it in such abundance as a common blessing to mankind ; without it the rich would be wretched, and the poor much more miserable than they are.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 16. Consider what a dreadful plague this was, and remember that GOD can inflict the like on whomsoever he pleases ; and how thankful we ought to be, that we are not tormented with frogs as the Egyptians were. The magicians not being able to *remove* this plague, showed that they had not *brought* the frogs, and Pharaoh was obliged to beg Moses and Aaron to intercede for him. By the frogs going away just at the time Pharaoh named, the LORD proved that they did not go of themselves ; and by permitting Moses to plead for Pharaoh, the LORD conferred great honour on his minister. Observe, that, as soon as the plague was removed, Pharaoh hardened his heart yet more.

The two miracles, of changing the river into blood, and sending frogs into the houses of the Egyptians, proved that the LORD was the only GOD that had power over the waters, and served at the same time as a just punishment on the Egyptians for their abominable practices. Observe that upon Aaron's stretching forth the *rod of GOD*, the frogs came in all the places where the LORD had foretold they would. Aaron did no more than stretch out his hand, the magicians did the same, but the power of the LORD had gone forth before

they began, and we may be certain they could not add one to the number of frogs the LORD saw fit to send.

Ver. 16 to 20. The *dust* changed into *lice* must have been a most tormenting plague. The magicians probably tried by their enchantments to bring lice upon the Israelites. Take notice what they said, *ver. 19*, and what effect the miracle, and the magicians' remarks upon it, had upon Pharaoh. Reflect also that people are very seldom tormented with lice in a common way except from carelessness or nastiness, and how thankful we ought to be to GOD that he does not send this plague upon us.

Ver. 20 to the end. Consider how troublesome a few flies are, and the mischief they frequently do by spoiling meat and other things, and stinging people, and what a dreadful thing it must have been to the Egyptians to have such swarms as are here described. How thankful we ought to be to GOD for keeping us from such a plague. Observe the difference which the LORD made betwixt the Egyptians and those he called *his people*, and the reason he made this destruction, *ver. 22*. If the flies had *been every where*, the people might have thought they increased and came by chance, but by naming the places where they should, and should not be, and sending them accordingly, the LORD proved himself to be *the LORD of the whole earth*. It was part of their flocks and herds which the Israelites were to offer in sacrifice; the Egyptians made idols of these creatures. Observe that Pharaoh was terrified with this plague, so that he wished to get rid of it, and Moses kindly admonished him *not to deal deceitfully*; but no sooner were the flies removed, than Pharaoh, instead of being thankful for the mercy, hardened his heart again. It is thus that presumptuous sinners go on from sin to sin in spite of warnings or admonitions, though they appear to be softened while under afflictions. Let us consider what use we ought to make of afflictions, namely, to numble ourselves under the mighty hand of GOD, repent of our sins, and amend our ways.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 8. The Egyptians did not feed upon cattle, they made idols of them. Observe that with every message the
LORD

LORD threatened a *new plague* to Pharaoh, in case he refused to obey his voice. Think how shocking it was to see the sheep and cattle die, but it had no other effect upon the heart of Pharaoh than to harden it still more.

Ver. 8 to 13. How wonderful it must have been to see man and beast in an instant covered with dreadful sores, and what a comfort to the Israelites to be free from such painful diseases. Observe that the magicians were afflicted with the *boil*, but it seems Pharaoh was not; yet instead of Pharaoh's heart being softened, it was hardened; this was owing to his wickedness, for had he had any goodness, he would have been thankful and submissive to GOD for his mercy.

Ver. 13 to 22. Observe, *ver. 14*, that the LORD sent all these plagues upon Pharaoh and his people that *they might know there was none like him*. Observe, also, *ver. 16*, that the LORD *raised up Pharaoh*, that is, let him live and continue king of Egypt, instead of cutting him off, *on purpose to show in him his almighty power, and that the name of the LORD might be declared throughout the earth, that all the nations might know that the LORD was the only ALMIGHTY GOD*. These purposes have been answered. Pharaoh's sin consisted in his *setting himself up against the LORD*. Observe, *ver. 20*, that there were some among the people of Egypt who *feared the LORD, and believed his word*, and mercy was shown to them, while those who *did not regard the word of the LORD* were plagued.

Ver. 22 to 27. Consider what a dreadful plague this was, and how wonderful that the people of Israel should not feel the effects of it!

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe, that Pharaoh could not stand against this plague, and that Moses was ready to intreat the LORD for him, and that the LORD graciously stopped the plague; but as soon as the danger ceased, Pharaoh hardened his heart yet more, and resolved *not to obey the LORD*, but to detain the Israelites in defiance of him—this shows that he was a most presumptuous sinner.

CHAPTER. X.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that it is said *the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and the hearts of his servants*, by which we are to understand that GOD withheld his HOLY SPIRIT from them as a just punishment for their presumptuous sin. Observe, also, the words of the LORD's message, *ver. 3*, and take notice of what Pharaoh's servants said, *ver. 7*, when the locusts were threatened; and the obduracy of Pharaoh, *ver. 10, 11*; also his presumption in driving the ministers of the LORD away from his presence with threats.

Ver. 12 to 21. Locusts are a kind of large grasshoppers, of which there are great numbers in some countries, that fly in prodigious swarms, so as to darken the air like thick clouds, and wherever they alight, they devour the corn, the grass, and the leaves of trees. In some countries these creatures have been seen, when at rest, to cover the ground to a considerable extent, four inches deep; and if a carriage or any thing happens to crush them, the smell is so offensive as scarcely to be borne, especially if they were before dead and in a putrid state. Consider, then, how distressing it must have been to the Egyptians to see swarms of locusts devouring the fruits of the earth which the hail had left. Observe, that this plague brought Pharaoh to a sense of his sin, but it was of short continuance; for the mercy of the LORD, by removing the danger, only hardened his heart. Think of the wonderful power of GOD, who can make the insect tribes, flies, lice, locusts, &c. as destructive to mankind as the most powerful armies of warriors; and how thankful we ought to be to GOD for his goodness in preventing these creatures from plaguing us, or destroying the fruits of the earth from year to year!

Ver. 21 to the end. Consider how very dreadful it must have been to such wicked wretches as Pharaoh and his servants to be in darkness as is here described for three days and three nights, and how gracious the LORD was in giving his people light in the midst of this darkness. Reflect what a blessing it is to have light and darkness in their turns, as GOD ordained at the creation. Pharaoh pretended to yield, but he

he only grew more and more hardened. Whenever he was required to let Israel go, he set himself up more and more against the LORD. Observe, also, Pharaoh's threatening, *ver.* 28, and the answer of Moses, *ver.* 29, from whence we may judge that Moses had received commands to deliver the LORD's message to the people of Israel, and his last message to Pharaoh, which you will read in the next chapter, before he said to Pharaoh, *I will see thy face again no more.*

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to the end. Observe, that GOD saw fit to give to the people of Israel the things mentioned in this verse, to recompense them for the bondage and hard usage they had suffered as slaves in Egypt. Observe, that the LORD kept bringing worse and worse plagues upon Pharaoh and his people the more they resisted his holy will, and disobeyed his commands. The LORD never brought any of these plagues without first giving notice of his intending to do so, by which he showed that they were really sent by him, and that the Egyptians defied his power. Take particular notice of the LORD's *last message* delivered by Moses to Pharaoh, and observe that, after having delivered it, Moses went out from the presence of Pharaoh in great anger, from which time he never saw the face of Pharaoh again. Observe, also, that all the wonders wrought by the LORD had no other effect upon Pharaoh than to harden his heart; but let us not think from this, that GOD *made him wicked.* Pharaoh was a presumptuous sinner before GOD sent any judgments upon him, and he deserved to have been cut off from the earth when he first said, *Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice to let Israel go; I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.* But the LORD, who knew his wicked heart, had seen fit first to *raise Pharaoh up* to the throne instead of cutting him off, that he might show in him his power, see *chap. ix. ver. 16*; and afterwards, instead of cutting him off immediately, the LORD had preserved his life under the various judgments that he sent upon him and his people; and permitted him to go on in defiance of his Almighty power, in order to show in him to what a height of wickedness

wickedness those people will go on who set themselves against GOD, and provoke him to take his holy spirit from them, which is the most dreadful punishment that can be inflicted upon sinners in this world; but we must remember that Pharaoh brought it upon himself, and we should take warning from what is here related concerning Pharaoh, to be humble and obedient towards THE LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe, *ver. 1 and 2*, that the beginning of the year was changed to the Israelites; they were to date it from the day of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage; and that they were to keep a feast every year in remembrance of this wonderful deliverance. Observe, also, *ver. 11*, what this feast was to be called, and why this name was given to it. Remember, that the *Paschal Lamb*, that is, the lamb set apart for the passover, was designed to represent the *Redeemer of the World*, as you will find from the *New Testament*. The passover was one of the three great festivals in the Jewish church. Observe, *ver. 7 and 13*, what the Israelites were to do in order to testify their faith in the promise GOD had made to preserve their first born, and deliver all his people out of Egyptian bondage.

Ver. 14 to 21. Observe, that these verses relate to the keeping of the passover afterwards, not to what the people of Israel were to do in the land of Egypt. The Jews still keep the feasts of the passover by eating unleavened bread, &c. but not with sacrifices as formerly; because, when they were settled in the land of Canaan, they were commanded to offer sacrifices only at the temple at Jerusalem; and the temple was long ago destroyed.

Ver. 21 to 29. Observe that the directions Moses gave to the Israelites were agreeable to the commandment he had before received from the LORD. Take particular notice of *ver. 27*, and keep in mind for what purpose the passover was first instituted, and that it was the will of the LORD that *children* should be made acquainted with his *divine ordinances*, that is, with the holy ceremonies he himself commanded; so that parents are sinful who neglect to have their children instructed

fructed in the ordinances of religion; and children are wicked who neglect the opportunity of learning them. Instead of the ordinances which the Israelites were to observe and teach, Christ ordained the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's supper. Observe, that the people of Israel obeyed the commandment of the LORD; not one is said to have disobeyed it. The sacrifice of the passover was a type or figure of the great sacrifice that was to be made for the sins of the world by the Redeemer.

Ver. 29 to 37. Observe, how exactly the word of the LORD was fulfilled in respect to the first born of Egypt, and Pharaoh's sending the people of Israel away with great substance. The death of their first born was such a visitation as must bring distress upon every family in Egypt; and it was a just punishment for their having commanded every son of the Israelites to be cast into the river. It was no robbery in the Israelites to take the jewels of gold, and silver, &c. of the Egyptians, though the latter might intend to claim them again, because the LORD had commanded the Israelites to take these things.

Ver. 37 to 43. Observe, *ver. 37*, how the people of Israel were increased in number since the death of Joseph; and recollect God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respecting their seed, *Gen. chap. xiii. ver. 16.* Observe, also, *ver. 39*, that they went out of Egypt in such haste that they had not time to bake their unleavened cakes; likewise, *ver. 40*, how long the sojourning of the children of Israel was in Egypt, and recollect what the LORD foretold to Abraham, *Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 14*, which should teach us to acknowledge the truth of the divine promises, and the wonderful ways of Providence. The following verses of this chapter relate to the Israelites only.

CHAPTER XIII.

The *first 16 verses* do not require our particular meditation, because they relate to the Israelites only.

Ver. 17 to the end. The Philistines were of the family of Ham, Noah's second son; they were a warlike people, and most likely would have come out against the Israelites if they
had

had passed through their country. Observe, how Moses fulfilled the dying request of Joseph, which is mentioned, *Gen. chap. l. ver. 25.* Take particular notice, *ver. 20, 21, 22,* of the *PILLAR of the CLOUD*, which was the token of God's PRESENCE, and observe, that it was very different from any thing in nature. It was impossible, indeed, that any thing could be like it.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, that the LORD commanded Moses to conduct the people to a place from which they could not escape the pursuit of Pharaoh and his host without a miracle, and why he did so, namely, that they might be forced to *fear and honour his divine power.*

Ver. 5 to 15. Take notice what a mighty army Pharaoh had collected together to pursue a people who knew nothing of war, but who had been kept in the most abject slavery, and how the Israelites were affected when they beheld Pharaoh and his host, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* Observe, how Moses encouraged them to trust in God, *ver. 13, 14.*

Ver. 15 to 23. Think what an astonishing miracle God promised to perform for the deliverance of his people, and how exactly it was fulfilled; and observe, *ver. 19, 20,* that it was the same Divine Being who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, who now went before the Israelites in the *cloudy pillar*, even the LORD GOD.

Ver. 23 to the end. Observe, how the Egyptians went on without fear till the LORD showed them his *glory*, and how the LORD delivered his people, and destroyed their enemies.

By the death of Pharaoh and his host, we learn that though God sometimes defers the punishment of presumptuous sinners for a while, he will surely cut them off at last, and that at the very time his servants appear to be in the most imminent danger, he is working their deliverance by the most unlooked-for means.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 20. This chapter contains a hymn of thanksgiving to the LORD for his wonderful deliverance of the people of Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, and from Egyptian bondage; it is the most ancient hymn we read of in history. Read it with attention, for it furnishes us with proper reflections upon the almighty power of God, and upon the folly as well as wickedness of those who set themselves up against the Divine Majesty. *The inhabitants of Palestine*, mentioned, *ver. 14*, were those who lived in the land of Canaan, which was also called Palestine. The latter part of this divine song expresses the faith of Moses in the promises of God respecting the future establishment of the people of Israel in the land of Canaan. By the *dukes of Edom*, are meant the descendants of Esau. Moab was one of the sons of Lot, from whom came the people called the Moabites.

Ver. 20, 21. This song of Moses was repeated by his sister Miriam, and without doubt the people, both men and women, joined in it.

The former chapters show that the LORD faithfully fulfilled the promise he made so long before to Abraham, (see *Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 14*,) and in a most astonishing manner. Observe, carefully, as you go on with the history, what mercies God showed to the children of Israel afterwards, for the sake of his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but as they had lived in an idolatrous country until they had almost forgot the God of their fathers, the LORD saw fit to expose them to various trials, that they might learn his ways and improve by them.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, how neglectful the Israelites were in so soon forgetting the wonderful deliverance that had been wrought for them by the power of the LORD; also, the goodness of the LORD in showing them that he had not brought them to that place to *kill them with thirst*, but to prove his kindness by working a miracle for their relief. Take particular notice of the LORD's gracious promise, *ver. 26*, and observe what a pleasant resting place he conducted them to afterwards.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 32. Observe, the ungrateful wish of the children of Israel, *ver. 3*, and the merciful way in which the LORD put a stop to their murmurings, *ver. 10*. Think how it must have struck them with awe to behold the GLORY OF THE LORD, and to know that he had heard their murmurings. Observe, *ver. 21*, the name which the Israelites gave to the bread which the LORD rained down from heaven for them; and take notice that the people of Israel were to depend upon the goodness of GOD for their *daily bread*. Observe, likewise, the provision that was made for the SABBATH DAY, that the people might rest upon it. In Egypt they had lost the sabbath, but as soon as GOD took them to be his peculiar people, the blessing of the sabbath was restored. Consider how wonderful it was that the *manna* which on every other day of the week spoiled if kept till the morrow, did not do so on the sabbath day. Observe, *ver. 27*, the unbelief of some of the people, and the reproof and commandment which the LORD sent them by Moses, *ver. 28, 29*.

Ver. 32 to the end. Think what a wonderful thing it was that the manna which was laid up should keep good such a number of years; probably they did not gather the omer full of it, which was five pints, till after the tabernacle and the ark were made.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe how the people *tempted*, that is, provoked, the LORD again, and murmured against Moses. Think how wonderful it was to see water springing from a barren rock only at the smiting of it! Observe, *ver. 7*, that the people were so destitute of faith that they doubted whether the LORD was among them or not, which was a great sin after the miracles they had seen, and the mercies they had received, and when the pillar of the cloud was in sight.

Ver. 8 to the end. Amalek was one of the grandsons of Esau; from him descended the people called Amalekites. It

is likely that they bore enmity to the descendants of Jacob, because they supposed he had deprived Esau of his birthright and the blessing of the LORD. But it was a presumptuous sin in the Amalekites to try to defeat the purposes of the Almighty, for they must have heard of the LORD's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What happened when Moses held up the rod of GOD, or let it fall, was a sign that it was the LORD HIMSELF who fought against Amalek. What the LORD commanded Moses to do, *ver. 14*, showed that He knew the Amalekites would bear constant hatred to the Israelites, and continue to worship idols.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 13. It appears from Jethro's sacrifice that he was a priest of the LORD, and therefore a very proper father-in-law for Moses. By rejoicing on account of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Jethro showed himself to be a good man, and set an example of charity.

Ver. 13 to the end. Observe from this portion of scripture how necessary it is that there should be governors to keep the people in good order, and that it is best to have one supreme magistrate, and others under him, as it is impossible for one man to perform the whole task of government. If the advice of Jethro to Moses had not been agreeable to the will of GOD, we may be sure Moses would have been commanded not to follow it. We should therefore regard government as a thing originally of divine appointment, and submit ourselves to our lawful governors.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that the LORD having delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, sent a message by Moses to tell them he would make a covenant with them. Take particular notice of what the LORD graciously promised to the Israelites, *ver. 5*, if they would keep his covenants, and think what an honour it was *to be a peculiar treasure to the LORD above all people*. Observe, *ver. 6*, what kind of a nation they were

were required to be; a nation that should be devoted to the service of the true GOD, while all other nations worshipped idols. Observe also, the people's answer by which they solemnly engaged themselves to keep GOD's commandments; and remember, that this covenant was made through the *mediation of Moses*; he was *the mediator* of it, that is, Moses acted as a friend betwixt the LORD and the people by delivering the LORD's message to them, and returning the words of the people unto the LORD. The Israelites were not worthy to hold intercourse with GOD, because they had been ungrateful for the deliverance he had afforded them; their mediator had not been a partaker of their fault, therefore he was allowed to plead for them.

Ver. 10 to 16. As the LORD was going to give them *the law*, he required the people to *sanctify themselves*, that is, to quit all their worldly occupations and pursuits, and to think of nothing but GOD and religion. The directions given for setting bounds to the people were designed to prepare them for receiving *the law of GOD* with reverence and fear.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe, what solemn and awful preparations were made for GOD's giving the law from mount Sinai. These served to convince the people that the LORD was really present, and that Moses did not deceive them. Remember that Moses continued to act as *mediator* between GOD and the people.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe, that GOD, himself, delivered the LAW in words, which the people could understand, and that this law consisted of the *ten commandments*, which now make a principal part of the religion of *Christians*, as the people of GOD, and will do so to the end of the world. This law contains nothing in it but what is perfectly just; it is *our duty* to keep it; we cannot be the *people of GOD* unless we do keep it. Observe, *ver. 2*, what GOD says of himself, and remember that the same LORD GOD has delivered mankind from a worse bondage than that of Egypt, the bondage of sin. Remember, that those who suffer any thing to draw their affections from GOD, set up idols in their heart; they worship
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in fact other gods of their own making, and break the *first commandment*. Observe what the LORD commands respecting *image worship in the second commandment*, and consider that it cannot be right for Christians to make use of images or pictures of our Saviour when they pray, and that it must be a very great offence against the second commandment to bow down to the pictures and images of the Virgin Mary, angels, and saints. Observe the gracious promise in this commandment to those that *love* GOD and keep his commandments; and the threatening to those that *bate him*; and think how much we are bound to love GOD and keep his commandments, as he is the author of our being, and the giver of all good things. By the LORD calling himself a *jealous* GOD, we are to understand that he will not suffer the honour and worship due to him alone, to be paid to any creature, or his commandments to be slighted.

Observe, *ver. 7*, that the LORD will consider those as guilty persons, and punish them who use any of his sacred names to wicked or idle purposes; and let this make you very careful not to offend in this way.

Observe, *ver. 8*, that the *fourth commandment* begins with calling upon the Israelites as the people of the LORD, to remember to keep holy the sabbath day, or to observe it as a HOLY DAY; and take notice, *ver. 11*, that GOD blessed the *seventh day* and *hallowed it*, because he had completed the works of creation. These works are most admirable in themselves, and highly useful and valuable to mankind; but if there were no *resting days* appointed, people would go on (as those do at present who disregard the sabbath) pursuing their business or their pleasures, forgetful of their CREATOR, and unmindful of the benefits he bestows. But by allotting six days for *all manner of work*, GOD has given sufficient time for every purpose in human life, and by appointing one day in seven to be a day of *holy rest*, time is also given for the service of GOD and the concerns of our eternal state. Observe how strictly the Israelites were required to keep the sabbath, and never while you live deprive yourself of the blessing which GOD bestows upon those who obey the *fourth* commandment. Turn to the beginning of the *second chapter of Genesis*, and read it with the explanation.

Ver. 12 to 15. Observe, here, what GOD commands respecting

parents, in the *fifth commandment*, and resolve to honour yours that you may obtain the promised blessing, which to the Israelites was long life in the land of Canaan, but to Christians it extends to eternal life in heaven. Observe that the *sixth commandment* is a repetition of the law against murder, which was given to Noah immediately after the flood, *Gen. chap. ix. ver. 5, 6*. The *seventh commandment, ver. 14*, is a repetition of the marriage law, given after the creation of the first woman, which enjoins fidelity and constancy to all married persons, both husbands and wives; wherever it is broken misery is sure to follow.

Ver. 15 to 18. Observe, that the *eighth commandment* enjoins strict honesty in all our dealings with our fellow-creatures, for want of which there is a great deal of evil in the world, and many a one is brought to a shameful and ignominious death. Observe, that by the *ninth commandment*, we are forbidden to swear falsely, or to raise or spread any false reports concerning our neighbours, and to be as tender of the reputation of others as of our own. Observe, that in the *tenth commandment*, we are enjoined not to indulge a wish or desire to have any thing that properly belongs to other people.

Ver. 18 to 22. Observe how the people of Israel were filled with dread and awe when the Law was given from mount Sinai, and think whether you should not have been affected in like manner had you been present on that awful occasion; and remember that though you cannot see God, he certainly sees you, and knows whether you keep his commandments or not, and will reward or punish you accordingly.

Ver. 22 to the end. These laws were given for the Israelites only, and were designed to keep them separate from idol worshippers. We may pass over the *21st and 22d chapters*, without any particular explanation, as they relate chiefly to the political laws of the Israelites; but we may observe in reading them, that the laws of our own nation agree with them in many respects; and that they contain many good moral precepts.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Though these rules were made for the Israelites in particular, they are worthy of observance by Christians, amongst whom the sins here forbidden are sometimes committed. Many people *raise false reports*, and others spread them, without considering that they offend God. Others, through false shame, *join with a multitude to do evil*, because they are afraid of being laughed at for being precise or singular. Others again will be *cruel to poor beasts* out of spite to their neighbours. Some will, for the sake of *a bribe*, do very base and dirty actions; and some make no scruple of imposing upon strangers, particularly on poor negro slaves, who work in the plantations abroad. All these things are very offensive to God, and every Christian should remember that without the redemption of CHRIST he would be under the worst of slavery; and that those people whose condition is the best in point of worldly possessions, are but *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*.

Ver. 12 to 20. Take particular notice of the LORD's injunctions to keep the SABBATH DAY holy. Observe the *three great feasts or festivals* which the people of Israel were to keep.

Ver. 20 to the end. The angel here promised was the same Divine Being who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, no other than the LORD God; he could be no less as *the name of God was in him*. Observe God's gracious promises, *ver. 22 to the end of the chapter*, and think how exactly they agree with those made before to Abraham; and take notice for what crime in particular the nations which are named were to be cut off. Observe also, how strictly the Israelites were enjoined to root out idolatry, and to serve the LORD only. Think of the encouragement which was given them to do so. Observe, *ver. 33*, why the Israelites were forbidden to make any covenant with the idolatrous nations, or suffer them to dwell in the land of Canaan. Nothing can be a greater snare than to live in a friendly familiar manner amongst wicked people, for it is scarcely possible to avoid being drawn

into some of their bad practices. Christians are strictly enjoined to keep themselves separate from notorious sinners, and warned that *evil communications corrupt good manners.* 1 Cor. chap. xv. ver. 33.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 9. The ceremonies used at this time were to ratify and confirm the covenant betwixt God and the people of Israel. The blood of the covenant, *ver. 8*, represented the blood of the Redeemer, who was to come into the world. God had now taken the Israelites to be his own peculiar people, and they had engaged to serve the LORD only, and to be a *holy nation*. You will understand these things better when you read St. Paul's Epistles.

Ver. 9 to the end. By showing forth his glory as is here described, the LORD graciously testified that Moses acted in all things relating to the covenant and the law, by his divine commission. Observe, that Moses, as the mediator betwixt God and the people, and Joshua who was to succeed him, were permitted to go up into the mount. From *ver. 18*, it appears that Joshua, though he went partly up the mountain, was not permitted to enter the cloud in which the LORD caused his glory to appear.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 10. This chapter contains the directions God gave to Moses for the tabernacle and its furniture, and the ark of the covenant. Observe, *ver. 2*, that the people of Israel were required to contribute willingly towards those sacred things, and they were told, *ver. 3 to 8*, what materials would be accepted from them. A *sanctuary*, *ver. 8*, signified a holy place, a place devoted to God to be used only for religious purposes. Observe that God *set before Moses patterns of every thing that was to be made* for religious worship, that the people, knowing all was ordered by God, might not introduce any of the ceremonies of idol worship into the worship of the true God.

Ver.

Ver. 10 to 23. The ark was a kind of chest made to be carried about occasionally from place to place. The *cover of the ark* was called the *mercy seat*. Observe, the ark was to hold the *testimony*, by which was meant the *tables of the ten commandments*, afterwards written by God himself, which the LORD promised to Moses on the mount, *chap. xxiv. ver. 12.* The exact form of these things is not known; but thus much we may understand, that the *mercy seat* was a type or shadow of the throne of the LORD God, on which he was seen in the visions of the prophets; and that the cherubims upon the *mercy seat* represented the holy angels. Observe the gracious promises which the LORD made respecting the mercy seat, that he would there, as the *God of Israel*, meet Moses as the mediator of the people, and give him commandments, that they might know what to do at all times to please him and retain his favour.

Ver. 23 to the end. As the things described in these verses were only intended for the people of Israel till the coming of CHRIST, there is no occasion to describe particularly their meaning or their uses.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter contains particular directions for making the *Tabernacle*, or place for public worship. Observe, that this was to be a *tent* and not a fixed building, because the people had no fixed abode, and frequently removed from place to place. The *most holy place* was a type of the highest heaven. The cherubims on the vail were types of the angelic host who attend upon the LORD.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 9. The *altar of burnt offerings* was placed before the door of the tabernacle; on this altar they offered the whole burnt offerings, that is, those offerings that were made by fire, and totally consumed.

Ver. 9 to 20. The *court before the tabernacle* was a large court, where the priests and Levites officiated, and where the people assembled for divine service.

Ver. 20 to the end. The law concerning the *lamps* which were to burn in the tabernacle in the night, was appointed to prevent any inconveniencies that might have happened, and that the ministers of the LORD might attend there and praise him continually; also, because the tabernacle was a type or shadow of *heaven*, in which God dwells in everlasting light.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 40. Observe in these verses that the dress of the high priest was to be very fine; the different parts of it were significant; but as they related to the Israelites only it is not necessary to study for the meaning of them; but it is proper to observe that HOLINESS TO THE LORD appears to have been engraven on the golden plate in the front of the mitre, in order to remind the priest himself that he was the minister of the LORD in holy things, and to prevent the people from making an idol of the high priest as they might otherwise have done.

Ver. 40 to the end. Observe that the other priests had garments appointed for them; from which, together with Aaron's dress, we learn that it is right and proper for the ministers of religion to be distinguished from the congregation by their dress while they are performing their holy functions. The peculiar habits of the Jewish priesthood were only to be worn in the tabernacle, or the temple; a more simple dress is suitable to the Christian worship, and none can be more proper than the surplice and the gown, which are worn by the clergy of the church of England.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1 to 38. Observe that before Aaron and his sons were permitted to officiate as *priests of the LORD*, they were to be consecrated, or set apart, for the sacred office, in a way ordained by the LORD himself. There was some particular meaning in all the ceremonies and sacrifices which the LORD commanded to be performed in consecrating Aaron and his sons to the priest's office; but we are not concerned to inquire

quire into them, because they were wholly to cease when the REDEEMER came. Thus much, however, we may learn from them, that no man was to take upon himself the priestly office without being ordained to it in GOD's appointed way; and from the New Testament we learn that the appointed way for ordaining Christian ministers is, by the laying-on of the hands of the bishops of the church.

Ver. 38 to the end. Observe that the sacrifice of the LAMB, which the LORD commanded, was to be offered every morning and evening. This was called the *daily sacrifice*, and it was offered for the sins of the people. It was a type, or shadow, of the great sacrifice which the Redeemer was to offer at GOD's appointed time for the sins of the whole world. Those who offered it with faith in GOD's promises, were pardoned for the sake of the Redeemer, who was to come into the world to offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The LAMB OF GOD, the Saviour of the world, having offered himself once for all, the sacrifice of the lamb, by which his sacrifice was prefigured, has ceased; and in the room of it Christians are required to offer up to GOD, every morning and evening, praises and prayer, which, if offered in *spirit and in truth*, and in the name of the Redeemer, will be accepted as *their* daily sacrifice. Observe in these verses the LORD's gracious promises that *he would dwell among the people of Israel and be their GOD*. A like promise is made to Christians, *2 Cor. chap. vi. ver. 16*; and we learn from the book of Revelations, that it will be the happiness of the blessed in heaven to have the LORD GOD dwelling among them.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 11. The incense was a composition of spices and perfumes, which when burning sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell. This incense was ordained as a sign, to signify that as the smoke of it ascended towards heaven, so would the prayers of the people go up to the throne of the LORD GOD.

Ver. 11 to 17. The half shekel which all the Israelites, rich and poor, were to pay, was a tribute and homage paid to GOD, to put them in mind of their dependance upon him.

This tribute was appointed to supply the necessary expenses of the tabernacle.

Ver. 17 to the end. God commanded the priests to wash themselves before they performed any of their ministerial functions, as a sign to them and all the people that they should present themselves before Him with purity of heart. Observe, *ver. 34*, the composition of spices and perfumes for the holy incense. The strict charge not to employ the holy oil and perfume to any other uses than those prescribed in the law, tended to inspire men with great reverence for religion and things set apart for divine service. The like reverence ought to be observed by Christians for holy things, particularly for the Books of Scripture, and the Common Prayer Book, which should never be thrown carelessly about, dirtied, dog's-eared, or scribbled in.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 12. As the people of Israel were ignorant of curious works fit for the tabernacle, God inspired two men among them with extraordinary ingenuity, that they might be able to direct all who should be disposed to execute what the LORD commanded Moses to have done. Remember the names of those two men.

Ver. 12 to 18. Observe that the keeping the SABBATH DAY was to be a *sign* between God and the Israelites, that he was the *same* LORD who had sanctified and blessed the *seventh day* at the creation of the world, and that they were the people of the LORD.

Ver. 18. Observe that these were the tables of stone, with the law written upon them, which the LORD promised to give to Moses when he called him up into the mount, *chap. xxiv. ver. 12*. They were called *tables of testimony*, because they were given to testify that God had taken the people of Israel into covenant with himself upon condition that they would keep the commandments written upon them. The first table contained the four commandments which relate to our duty to God; the second table contained the six commandments which relate to our duty to our neighbour.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe, that before the Israelites had received the *tables of testimony*, they broke their covenant with the LORD. Turn back to *chapter xix*, and read there what God required of the people, and what they promised to do before he spake *the law*. Read, also, *chap. xxiv. ver. 7*. Recollect the words of the first and second commandments, and think what a great sin they were guilty of in desiring to have an idol made for them like those of the Egyptians. The Egyptians worshipped a white bull; the *golden calf* was probably an image of this idol.

Ver. 7 to 15. Observe that the people's wickedness was known to the LORD—that he called them *Moses' people*, not his own, *ver. 7*. The LORD's words, *ver. 10*, were spoken to try Moses, whether he would act as their *mediator* or not. In pleading for them Moses acted as a faithful mediator, who had a regard to the honour of God, as well as to the good of the people, and his intercession prevailed, so that the LORD did not consume the people as they deserved, but spared them at the intercession of their mediator for the sake of his covenant with their forefathers.

Ver. 15 to 25. Moses broke the tables of testimony because the people had broken the covenant of which they were the pledge. Aaron's weak excuse showed that he had feared men rather than God.

Ver. 25 to 30. Observe that the *whole tribe of Levi* was on the LORD's side. By separating themselves from idolaters, the people of this tribe consecrated themselves to the LORD.

Ver. 30 to the end. Moses' words, *ver. 32*, *Blot me out of thy book which thou hast written*, signified, *let me not be among those who are to enter the promised land*. By this prayer he showed his great love for the people. Take particular notice of the LORD's promises and threatenings, *ver. 34*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe that the LORD, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and at the intercession of Moses, would have suffered their descendants to go to possess the land of Canaan, and would have driven out the idolatrous nations, but he no longer promised to be their GOD, to regard them as his peculiar people. These were evil tidings indeed!

Ver. 7 to 12. It appears that there was a tabernacle set apart for public worship, before that was made concerning which Moses received directions in the mount. Observe that the people went to this tabernacle in a most humble manner, and that after they returned to their tents, Moses, as their mediator, went to make intercession for them. Think how good and gracious the LORD was to meet with Moses, as is described, *ver. 11.*

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe the words of Moses in the latter part of the chapter, particularly his desire that GOD *would show him his way, ver. 13.* Take notice of the LORD's gracious answer, and what the LORD said when Moses requested that he might *see the glory of the LORD*, which shows that no man in this life can behold the glorious majesty of the LORD. What is usually called the *glory of the LORD* in the Old Testament, was a visible token of the Divine presence, suited to the faculties of the beholders; and even the appearance of the LORD, when Nadab and Abihu were permitted to behold him, was not in the full brightness of the Divine Majesty.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe the goodness of the LORD in restoring the tables of testimony, as a sign that he had pardoned his people and again taken them for *his own.* Take particular notice of the LORD's words when he *proclaimed his name*, that is, described himself, and declared the manner of his dealing with sinners.

Ver. 8 to 18. Observe what Moses did and said as soon as he

he knew from the LORD's own mouth that he would pardon *iniquity and sin*, though he would not *clear the guilty*, without an atonement being made for them; and take notice of the goodness of the LORD in renewing his covenant with the people, and of the injunctions he gave to them *not to forsake him to worship idols*, and that he called himself, as in the fourth commandment, *a jealous God*; that is, a God who, as he afterwards said by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, *would not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.* *Isa. chap. xlii. ver. 8.*

Ver. 18 to 27. The precepts in these verses were designed to remind the Israelites of the chief favours God had bestowed upon them, of the danger of mixing with wicked people, and to keep them from the customs of the idolatrous nations. Observe, *ver. 24*, in which the LORD promised the Israelites that while they went to keep the solemn feasts, he would not suffer an enemy to invade their land.

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe, *ver. 27*, what the LORD commanded Moses *to write in a book*, and that Moses was miraculously sustained without food for forty days. The appearance of Moses' face when he came down the mount, was a sign to the people that he had spoken to them from God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1 to 20. Observe here, that Moses did exactly what the LORD had commanded him while he was in the mount, and that he began with exhorting the people to keep the SABBATH DAY in the strictest manner on pain of death, and that he called upon them to make their offering for the tabernacle *willingly*.

Ver. 20 to the end. Observe with what readiness the people brought their offerings, and set about the works of the tabernacle. The extraordinary skill and ingenuity which the chief master-workmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, showed in all the works of the tabernacle was not natural to them, or learned from others, but inspired by the SPIRIT OF GOD.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Observe, that when the offerings were collected, those who had skill set earnestly about the different works under the direction of Bezaleel and Aholiab; that the people brought more than enough; that Moses restrained them from bringing more; and that every part of the tabernacle answered to the commands Moses had received from God concerning it. *Compare this chapter with chapter xxvi.*

CHAPTERS XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX.

Observe, here, that the ARK of the TESTIMONY, and all the other things mentioned in these chapters, were made agreeably to the commands of God concerning them; and that after every thing was finished, the workmen brought them to Moses for his approbation. The Israelites were not allowed to follow their own fancies in any thing that related to the public worship of God.

CHAPTER XL.

Ver. 1 to 34. This chapter shows the nature of the tabernacle, and the manner in which the various things belonging to it were disposed. Observe that the TABERNACLE was a *tent* which might be taken to pieces and carried from place to place. Remember that there was in the inner part of the tabernacle the HOLY PLACE and the MOST HOLY, and that they were divided by a *vail of fine linen*. That, in the MOST HOLY was placed THE ARK, in which were deposited the TWO TABLES OF TESTIMONY, and afterwards the *pot of manna*, and AARON'S *rod that budded*. Into the MOST HOLY none but the HIGH PRIEST entered. Before the vail in the HOLY PLACE stood the ALTAR OF INCENSE, with the TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD on the north side, and the GOLDEN CANDLESTICK on the south. At this altar the priests offered

INCENSE

INCENSE every morning and evening while the people were praying without. On the outside of the HOLY PLACE, and near the entrance, stood the BRAZEN SEA, in which the priests washed their feet, and the BRAZEN ALTAR, or ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS, where the sacrifices were burnt at which the people were present.

Ver. 34 to the end. Observe that when the tabernacle was set completely in order, and the priests, after having been consecrated, began to perform divine service, the LORD GOD gave visible and wonderful signs of his presence, to convince the Israelites he would accept the service they should pay in that place, and that he would be present in the midst of them and direct all their movements. The tabernacle continued about 500 years, being often removed from one place to another, till King Solomon built the *temple at Jerusalem*. Let us remember that the tabernacle and all that appertained to it were made by the express command and direction of GOD. That the tabernacle was suited to the condition of the Israelites at that time, and that all these things were figures and shadows of what was to be accomplished in the time of the gospel, when our LORD JESUS CHRIST was to come to establish a more perfect service.

LEVITICUS.

THIS book consists chiefly of rules and laws to be observed by the priests and Levites in the divine service. These laws being no longer in force, we will pass over most of the chapters; but the following particulars are necessary to be known concerning the sacrifices, as they are frequently referred to in other parts of the bible.

The sacrifices called *freewill offerings*, in which the victims were wholly consumed by fire, were of three kinds, such as *bulls* or *calves*; or small cattle, as *lambs*; or *goats*; or of *birds*, as *turtle doves* and *young pigeons*. They were called *freewill offerings*, because the Israelites were at liberty either to offer them or not; but all who did offer them were required to make their offerings of such things as the LORD had made known he would accept, and those who did not were reckoned ungodly people. Those who could not afford great and small cattle, might offer *pigeons*, by which means the poor as well as the rich had it in their power to perform their religious services. The *meat offerings* consisted of flour mingled with oil, and incense, baked in an oven. The *first fruits* consisted of ears of corn dried by the fire, and oil and incense poured upon them. These were partly burnt in honour of God, and the rest belonged to the priest. By these offerings, the Israelites acknowledged that they were indebted to God for all the fruits of the earth. The *peace offerings* were appointed to give sinners an opportunity of making their peace with God. A peace offering was either a lamb, or a goat, which the sinner was to take to the door of the tabernacle, and lay his hand upon the head of it, to signify that it was to be sacrificed in his stead, and then to kill it. Then the priest took some of its blood and sprinkled it upon the altar, after which the sacrifice was to be burnt, except such parts as were allotted to the priests. These sacrifices related to the atonement which CHRIST was to make for the sins of the world. You will learn from the New Testament that they

had

had no virtue in themselves to take away sin, but GOD appointed them in order that, when the people of Israel had sinned, they might know how to apply to him for mercy, before the REDEEMER came into the world, and when they offered these sacrifices in obedience to GOD's command, he forgave their sins for the sake of the REDEEMER.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe that, in the ceremonies, and at the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priest's office, every thing was done exactly as the LORD had before commanded; and that the first act of Aaron, as the LORD's HIGH PRIEST, was to pronounce a *blessing* upon the people; which blessing the LORD graciously confirmed, by showing forth his glory in the sight of all the people. The fire which came from the glory of the LORD and consumed the burnt-offering, was a testimony that the LORD approved the offerings, and owned Aaron and his sons as his priests. This fire was called *holy fire*, and it was a principal part of the business of the priests to keep it from going out.

CHAPTER X.

Observe that the crime of Nadab and Abihu was, that they presumed to make an alteration in the ordinances of GOD by taking common fire to kindle the perfume in their censers, instead of taking fire from the altar. They were made an example of, in order that both the priests and people might be afraid of offending the LORD in like manner. Aaron, and his other sons, were commanded not to mourn for Nadab and Abihu, because it was their duty as priests to have more regard for the honour of GOD than for their nearest relations. From the prohibition to the priests not to *drink wine*, it is supposed that Nadab and Abihu were intoxicated when they committed the sin for which *they were struck dead*. But the offence for which they suffered was that of departing from the ordinances of the LORD.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter does not require examination, as it related to the Jews only; but the following particulars should be noticed. It appears, that in the early ages of the world, there was a distinction made betwixt *clean* and *unclean beasts*; see *Gen chap. vii.* God saw fit to give his people Israel more particular laws on this head, to distinguish them from the neighbouring nations, who did likewise make a distinction between animals both for religious and common uses; but God appointed a distinction quite different from any observed by idolatrous nations, to remind the Israelites that they were *His people*. Besides, these laws served to restrain the Jews from indulging their appetites, and to keep them in dependance upon God in all things relating to their food, as well as for reasons of health. Since the gospel has been established these laws have been abolished, but the Jews still observe a peculiarity of diet.

CHAPTERS XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII.

These chapters related entirely to the Israelites.

CHAPTER XIX.

Observe, *ver. 2*, what kind of people those should be who *have the LORD for their God*, and consider what *Christians* ought to be as the *people of God*. Many other precepts in this chapter are as suitable to Christians as they were then to the Israelites, as we may perceive if we read them with attention; but others were intended for the Israelites only.

CHAPTERS XX, XXI, XXII.

These chapters related to the Israelites only.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 4. This chapter relates to the principal feasts of the Jews. Observe, which was the *first* of these, *ver. 3*, and with what strictness they were to keep it; and remember that the commandment of the LORD to *keep the SABBATH holy*, remains in force, and will do so to the end of the world, though our Saviour allows of some abatement to Christians in the very strict manner of keeping it enjoined to the Israelites.

Ver. 4 to 9. The feast of the *passover* was ordained to keep up the remembrance of GOD's passing over the houses of the people of Israel when he destroyed the first born of the Egyptians. See *Exodus, chap. xii.*

Ver. 9 to 15. The offering the *first fruits* was a solemn acknowledgment that the Israelites were required to make to GOD for increasing the fruits of the earth.

Ver. 15 to 23. This was called the *feast of Pentecost*, it was celebrated by the Israelites after harvest as a mark of their gratitude to GOD, and to put them in mind of the giving of the law from mount Sinai fifty days after their deliverance from Egypt. See *Exodus, chap. xix. xx.*

Ver. 24 to 26. This was called the *feast of trumpets*, because it was ushered in with the sound of trumpets.

Ver. 26 to 33. The *day of atonement* was the most solemn fast ordained of GOD; it was to be kept once every year, that in this day the Israelites might humble themselves before him, by fasting and confessing of sins, and obtain pardon and absolution. On this day only the HIGH PRIEST *entered into the HOLY OF HOLIES*. St. Paul in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, has shown the relation which the sacrifices offered this day had to the atonement made by Christ.

Ver. 33 to the end. The *feast of tabernacles* was a time of great rejoicing; it was kept by the Israelites in remembrance of their forefathers dwelling in tents in the wilderness. Observe, that the purpose of these feasts and fasts was, that the people might not forget the signal mercies which the LORD had bestowed upon them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 10. These verses relate to some of the holy ordinances which were for the Israelites only.

Ver. 10 to 17. We have here an account of the punishment of a man who had *blasphemed the name of the LORD*, and *curfed*, which shows how offensive to GOD oaths and curses are; though in the present state of things crimes are not punished in the same way, yet they will certainly not be passed over in the world to come. *See the 3d Commandment.*

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe, how very strict the Jewish law was, and compare this passage with that part of our LORD's sermon on the mount, in which some of its precepts are explained, *Matthew, chap. v.*

CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter relates entirely to the Israelites, but you may observe that they were not only required to keep the *seventh day* holy, but also to keep a *sabbath of years*, and a *jubilee* every fiftieth year. These divine ordinances had doubtless a spiritual meaning, but it is not necessary for us to enter into it; however we may observe, in general, that the laws in this chapter had a particular respect to the relief of the poor and needy, and to the re-instatement of those who, by misfortune, had been obliged to part with the inheritance of their fathers, or who were in a state of servitude.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 3. Observe how frequently the Israelites were admonished to keep from idolatry, and to remember that their GOD is the LORD, the SUPREME BEING, the ONLY GOD.

Ver. 3 to 14. Observe what various *blessings* the LORD promised to his people if they would be obedient to his laws; and consider which of these blessings was the most valuable.

Ver.

Ver. 14 to 40. Observe the various *curfes* which the LORD threatened to fend upon the Israelites if they were disobedient, all which they afterwards brought upon themselves.

Ver. 40 to the end. Observe, here, that GOD graciously promised to restore the Israelites after he had afflicted them, if they would turn and repent.

This chapter requires particular attention, as it accounts for the LORD's dealings afterwards, when the Israelites as a nation kept the commandments and statutes of the LORD, when they forsook him and worshipped idols, when they repented and returned to their duty, and when they were captives in a foreign land.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 30. Though these laws were made for the Israelites, Christians may learn from them that a *singular vow* is a very solemn thing. The *baptismal vow* is a singular, or personal one; for it engages every person who takes it to lead a holy, religious life.

Ver. 30 to the end. We see here that the paying of tithes was not a thing of human invention; it was enjoined by the LORD himself for the maintenance and support of his ministers, and having never been abolished by him, it continues in perpetual obligation. To refuse to pay tithes is despising the commandments of GOD.

NUMBERS.

THIS book has its name from the numbering of the children of Israel, of which there is a full account in the first chapter. The history it contains begins in the second month of the second year, after the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and ends in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, taking in the space of thirty-nine years. This book, also, contains several laws which God gave to the Israelites, and an account of some remarkable things which happened while they were in the wilderness.

CHAPTER I.

This chapter shows the prodigious increase of the Israelites from the time that Jacob went down into Egypt with his sons and their families, when the whole number amounted in all to threescore and ten persons only. Every *family* was now become a *tribe*, and the twelve tribes together made a *nation*, which was likely to be, according to the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *like the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea shore for multitude*. The Levites were not numbered with the other tribes because they were not obliged to go out to war, and because they were separated for the service of the tabernacle. Take notice what their work was, and remember that all priests were of the *tribe of Levi*; also, in what manner the Levites had *consecrated themselves to the LORD*. See *Exodus, chap. xxxii. ver. 29*. Take notice, *ver. 46*, of the total number of the people of Israel, without the tribe of Levi, and without reckoning old men, women, and children, and youths under the age of twenty years.

CHAPTER II.

Observe, in this chapter, the beautiful order in which the tribes of Israel were disposed when they were encamped, and when they were on their march, each having its proper post and rank assigned. This was necessary to prevent confusion which otherwise must have been frequent in so great a multitude. God ordained that the twelve tribes should be encamped and ranged at a certain distance roundabout the tabernacle, by which means that HOLY PLACE in which God showed forth his PRESENCE was in the midst of the camp. The privilege of having God thus in the midst of them, was the foundation of all the happiness of the people of Israel. What, therefore, the LORD commanded in this respect, served at once to display his divine wisdom, and to maintain religion and good order among the people.

CHAPTER III.

Observe, in this chapter, the regulation which the LORD made in respect to the service of the Levites, that each might know his proper office, and that there might be no confusion. Observe, also, *ver. 11, 12*, that instead of requiring all the *first born sons* to be dedicated to his peculiar service, the LORD took to himself the *whole tribe of Levi*, and that all the parents among the Israelites were to make an offering according to their circumstances of *a lamb or two young pigeons*, when they presented their *first born sons* in the temple. Take notice, *ver. 38*, that the *highest offices* were assigned to Moses and Aaron, and the sons of Aaron, and that none, except those of the tribe of Levi, were to come nigh the sanctuary. Observe, also, the total number of the Levites, *ver. 39*; also, *ver. 46, &c.* that all the first born of Israel *above the number of the Levites*, were to be redeemed by paying a fixed price to the priests. This was intended to preserve the remembrance of God's merciful preservation of the first born of Israel, when those of the Egyptians were destroyed. See *Exodus, chap. xx. xxxi.*

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter relates entirely to the service of the Levites. Observe, *ver. 3*, the *age* at which the Levites were admitted into their holy offices, and with what regularity and order they were commanded to take down the tabernacle: also the number of those who were to be in actual service.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter consists of laws and ordinances which were made only for the Israelites.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter, also, consists of institutions peculiar to the Israelites. Take notice, *ver. 22, to the end*, of *the form of BLESSING which the high priest was to use*, and of the LORD's commanding the priests to *call Israel by HIS NAME*, that is, *the people of the LORD GOD*; the most distinguishing honour any people can have in this world. The blessing pronounced by the clergy of the church of England after their sermons; answers to this blessing of the priests of Israel, *the peace of GOD which passeth all understanding, &c.* It is a very great act of irreverence to GOD, to leave his house whilst this blessing is pronouncing by the minister, yet the practice is a very common one.

CHAPTER VII.

The offerings enumerated in this chapter were given by *heads*, or *principal men*, of families, in addition to what had been before given for the work of the tabernacle. Observe how liberal they were, and with what zeal and cheerfulness they were presented. Call to mind the promise GOD made to Moses, *Exodus, chap. xxv. ver. 22*, and consider, *ver. 89*,
whose

whose DIVINE VOICE it was Moses heard from the *mercy seat*, and how faithfully GOD fulfilled his promise.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter relates entirely to the service of the Levites.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, here, the second celebration of the passover, and that it was performed according to the original institution of it.

Ver. 15 to the end. Consider what a great advantage it was to the Israelites to have a *token of the LORD'S PRESENCE* continually before them in the cloudy pillar, to guide them in all their movements, and that Christians have in respect to their spiritual enemies instead of this token, the *holy scriptures*, which GOD has graciously caused to be written as a guide to direct them to HEAVEN.

CHAPTER X.

Observe, at the latter end of this chapter, that in all their movements the *ARK of the LORD* was to go before the Israelites, following the *PILLAR OF THE CLOUD*, to keep them constantly in mind of their entire dependance upon GOD. Observe, also, the prayer which Moses made use of when the *ARK was removed*, and when it *rested*.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe the shameful ingratitude of the Israelites, and how soon they forgot their sufferings in Egypt, and took a distaste to the bread that came down from heaven. Christians should take warning from this, not to prefer earthly things to heavenly.

Ver. 10 to 30. Observe how greatly Moses was grieved at

the ingratitude of the people; and that he was so overcome with the trial as to wish to die rather than bear the burden of governing them; and that the Lord, knowing how great his trial was, pardoned the impatience he expressed, and graciously appointed him assistants, and gave them the help of his HOLY SPIRIT to qualify and sanctify them for their high office. Observe the number of elders that were appointed, and the name of Moses' servant; also Moses' answer when he was told that others besides himself were made prophets, *ver. 29*, by which we should learn not to envy the blessings and advantages which God sees fit to bestow upon others.

Ver. 30 to the end. Observe, here, that the LORD punished the people of Israel by granting their desires. This should teach us to desire those things only which God sees fit for us.

CHAPTER XII.

Consider what a great trial it was to Moses to have his own brother and sister speak against him. Observe how the LORD reproved Aaron and Miriam for it, and what he said of Moses, *ver. 7, 8*, which shows that Moses, as the mediator of the Israelites, was above the priests, and was to be honoured in the highest manner, next to God himself; and that Aaron and Miriam sinned against God in setting themselves up as equals to him whom God had placed over them. Observe how Miriam was punished, and Aaron spared, because he confessed his sin; also, how Moses intreated God for her with the utmost kindness, from which we should learn to return good for evil, and to pray for those who have offended instead of taking revenge upon them,

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. i to 26. Observe that the people of Israel were now come to the borders of the promised land, and that the LORD permitted Moses to send a man from every tribe, that the people might be encouraged by their report to go and inhabit so fruitful a country. In the *book of Deuteronomy, chap. i.*
ver.

ver. 22, we read that it was in compliance with the people's own request that these men were sent.

Ver. 26 to the end. Observe what a different report was made by *ten of the spies* to that which was made by Caleb. They paid no regard to the LORD's promise that he would drive out the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites, and the other Canaanites, and give their land to his people. They considered not that the sons of Anak, though giants, were but men, and could not stand against the power of the LORD; neither did they call to mind how they had been enabled to subdue Amalek, *Exodus, chap. xvii.* and what the LORD had caused to be written in a book concerning them. Caleb thought of these things, and placed a firm trust and confidence in the LORD. There are people in the world who would make Christians doubt the truth of GOD's promises in respect to heaven, while there are others who endeavour with the utmost zeal to persuade them to believe and follow the directions they may find in the Scriptures. We should consider which of these it is our duty and our interest to obey.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, that in proposing to *make themselves a captain*, and to *return into the land of Egypt*, the Israelites openly rebelled against the Lord their GOD, just as he would have put them in possession of the *promised land* if they had been faithful and obedient. Turn back to *Exodus, chap. xxxiv. ver. 10, 11*, and read what the LORD graciously promised when he made a covenant with them; and consider, also, what wonderful miracles the LORD wrought for them when he delivered them out of the land of Egypt. In the *ninth chapter of Nehemiah, verse 17*, we read that they did actually choose themselves a captain.

Ver. 5 to 13. Observe how faithful to the LORD Caleb and Joshua were, and what they thought concerning the conquest of the land of Canaan, and think how it must have struck the rebels with awe when the GLORY OF THE LORD suddenly appeared before them, and how they must have been struck with dread and consternation, when the LORD spoke to Moses what is in the *11th and 12th verses*. Remember it

was to put the love of Moses for the people to the proof, that the LORD offered to *disinherit Israel* and to make of him a greater nation than them. The LORD knew what Moses would say; besides Moses might have been afraid to intercede for them when they had been guilty of such an enormous offence if the LORD had not thus given him encouragement.

Ver. 13 to 26. Observe the great zeal of Moses for the honour of the LORD, that he perfectly remembered what the LORD had said to him when he proclaimed the NAME OF THE LORD. See *Exodus, chap. xxxiv. ver. 5, 6, 7,* and observe that Moses believed GOD to be an all *merciful Being* as he had declared himself, for he besought him *to forgive the iniquity of his people for his mercy's sake*; and that the LORD proved himself to be all merciful by *pardoning their sin*, so that he would not cast off Israel from being his people; but at the same time the Lord showed that he *would not clear the guilty*, or let that generation, which had so offended and dishonoured him, escape unpunished; but Caleb and Joshua were to enter into the promised land because they had shown that they believed the Lord would fulfil his covenant. Observe, that this was the *provocation in the wilderness*, mentioned by the Royal Psalmist in the *95th Psalm*, when the LORD *swore in his wrath that those he had brought out of the land of Egypt should not enter into the rest he had prepared for them in the land of Canaan*. Observe the Lord's command, *ver. 25*, which compelled the Israelites to turn back instead of going towards the land of Canaan.

Ver. 26 to 35. Observe what the LORD threatened to do to the rebels, and consider whether it was not a mild and merciful sentence to what they had reason to expect.

Ver. 36 to 40. Observe that the LORD saw fit to make examples of those who were the ringleaders in this *dreadful provocation*; and think what a comfort and happiness it must have been to Caleb and Joshua, that their conduct had pleased the Lord! Consider that the Israelites had indeed great cause to mourn when they were condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness, and die there, instead of being put in possession of a land abounding with all the necessities and comforts of life! *St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. iii. iv.* teaches Christians how to apply this part of the history

history of the Israelites to themselves, so that they may not lose the *eternal rest* prepared for them in HEAVEN.

Ver. 40 to the end. Observe that the Israelites even after they had mourned for having so greatly offended the LORD, again acted contrary to his command, in going up against the Amalekites and the Canaanites when they were forbidden. Their ill success shows that whatever is undertaken against the will of God cannot succeed.

CHAPTER XV.

The laws in this chapter were for the Israelites only ; but we should observe, *ver. 30*, the punishment that was to be inflicted upon the presumptuous sinner ; also, at the latter end of the chapter, the punishment of the sabbath-breaker. This man had been guilty of a presumptuous sin, he had acted against the express command of God, which enjoined them to keep from all manner of work, and not even to make a fire in their dwellings upon the sabbath-day.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 40. Observe that it was a *presumptuous sin* which Korah and his companions were guilty of ; they were common Levites, and they tried to put themselves upon an equality with Moses and Aaron. In doing this they rebelled against the LORD, who had made Moses his prophet, and had ordained him to be *governor over Israel* ; and had also ordained Aaron to be *high priest*, and his sons to be *priests* under himself. The dreadful punishment inflicted on these men, showed that they were *sinners against the Lord* in attempting to overturn his divine ordinances.

Ver. 40 to the end. The people who murmured were also guilty of presumptuous sin ; they *reproached the LORD* who had by a just judgment cut off the presumptuous sinners. Moses and Aaron certainly could not have put the two hundred and fifty to death by causing the earth to open and swallow them up alive, but there were doubtless many among the congregation who sinned in this manner through *ignorance*, and the LORD had directed that atonement should be made for those who should sin through ignorance, *chap. xv. ver. 27*, the meaning
of

of which was, that if a certain offering was made for them according to God's command, God would for his mercy's sake pardon their sins: this offering Aaron, by the advice of Moses, hastened to make, and we may be sure that none but those who had *sinned presumptuously*, were cut off by the plague. Observe that these severe judgments were necessary to awe such a people as the Israelites and keep them to their duty; and this should serve as a warning to Christians not to presume to take upon themselves to act as the *ministers of God* without being properly ordained to the holy office: and the fate of those who followed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when they set themselves up against Moses and Aaron, should serve as a warning to those thoughtless people who suffer themselves to be enticed by strange teachers who are not in holy orders, to *forsake* and even to *despise* their proper pastors, the regular ministers of the church.

CHAPTER XVII.

Observe, that the miracle which this chapter gives an account of, showed beyond dispute that the LORD had chosen Aaron to the priesthood. It pleased the LORD that Aaron's rod should be preserved in the tabernacle, to keep up the remembrance of this wonderful event, and to put the people constantly in mind that they must keep to the *divine ordinances* in all things, and not presume to act against the revealed will of God; a lesson which every Christian should learn and practise.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe that the Levites were in future to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, but that none except the priests were to officiate at the altar of incense, which was placed without the vail that divided the HOLY PLACE from the MOST HOLY in the tabernacle.

Ver. 8 to the end. Take notice that not only the *priests*, but the whole *tribe of Levi*, were provided for, by a portion of the sacrifices and the tythes. By these means the ministers
of

of religion were supported in a comfortable and decent manner, without being forced to follow any of the ordinary occupations of life. And after this manner the Christian church has provided for the ministers of the gospel; turn to *1st Cor. chap. ix.* and see what St. Paul says upon the subject.

CHAPTER XIX.

Consider, that as God commanded the Jews to purify themselves according to the ceremonies here prescribed, those Christians who neglect the means of cleansing their souls from the defilement of sin, must be totally unfit to hold any communion with God; of course it is very dangerous to neglect receiving the sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER, which was ordained by Christ for this purpose. Yet it is the general practice for people of all ranks to turn their backs upon the holy table, the altar of the Lord, as if there was no use in going to it.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 14. What is related here, and in the following chapter, happened towards the end of the forty years which the people of Israel spent in the wilderness. We find them murmuring as they had formerly done, notwithstanding the numberless mercies which they had received from the LORD, and the chastisements which had been inflicted upon them to bring them to a sense of their duty. Recollect that when the LORD formerly brought water out of the rock at Horeb, Moses was commanded to *strike the rock*, but upon this occasion he was commanded only to *speak to the rock*, and the LORD assured him water should spring forth. But, observe, *ver. 10, 11*, instead of doing as the LORD commanded him, Moses, being angry with the people, forgot for an instant that he was the minister of the LORD, and spake and acted as if the people had rebelled against *him* only, and not against GOD; and as if himself and Aaron were able to do miracles by their own power. It was on this account Moses and Aaron were to be punished.

Ver. 14 to 23. Recollect that the land of Edom was inhabited by the nation of the Edomites, which descended from Esau, called also Edom, the brother of Jacob, and you will perceive why Moses, *ver. 14*, called the people of Israel *brother to the nation of Edomites*. The refusal of the Edomites was very cruel, and they were almost ever afterwards enemies to the *people of God*; but the Israelites did not at that time make war upon them, because GOD had given the Edomites the land they then inhabited, and the time was not yet come for them to be in subjection to the Israelites, according to the prophecy of Isaac when he blessed his sons. See *Genesis, chap. xxvii.*

Ver. 23 to the end. Aaron was no longer fit for the office of high priest after having acted contrary to the command of the LORD. For this reason it pleased the LORD that he should die; but we have reason to think that Aaron received the whole of his punishment in this life, and that he was admitted into heaven. Observe, that before he died, his office was filled up by the LORD's appointment, *ver. 26*. The people were not allowed to choose a high priest for themselves, neither was Eleazar suffered to take the office as a matter of course, on account of his being the eldest son of the former high priest.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 10. The refusal of the people of Edom to let Israel pass through their land, obliged them to march a long way round, and so perverse were they that every little difficulty disheartened them. Observe, *ver. 3*, that some of the cities of the Canaanites were given into the hands of the Israelites in the days of Moses. Observe, also, that by despising the bread which came down from heaven, which was the immediate gift of GOD, the Israelites brought the just anger of GOD upon them; but that, when bitten by fiery serpents, they confessed their sin, and their *mediator* prayed for them. Observe, likewise, what the LORD commanded Moses to do, *ver. 8*, to prove their faith, and to see whether they believed in his word, and trusted in his mercy; also, the happy effect which followed, *ver. 9*, to those who with faith

looked up to the brazen serpent. In the 3^d chapter of *St. John's Gospel*, our LORD JESUS CHRIST speaks of the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness as a type of his crucifixion.

Ver. 16, 17. Observe here, that the people believed when the LORD promised them water, and instead of murmuring expressed their faith in an hymn, and followed the direction of their mediator.

Ver. 21 to the end. The Amorites were among the nations whose land was given to Abraham as a possession for his posterity when they should become a great nation; *see Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 16, &c.* Observe how the Israelites overcame two mighty kings, and got possession of the country of the Amorites, from whence we may conclude that the *iniquity of the Amorites was then full*, that they had sinned to the utmost that GOD will suffer any nation to do before he destroys it by some signal judgment, such as war, pestilence, earthquake, or famine.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Moab was one of the sons of Lot, and the Moabites were the posterity of Moab. Midian, signified the Midianites, the nation or people who came from Midian, one of the sons of Abraham; *see Genesis, chap. xxv. ver. 2.* The Midianites, as well as the Moabites, were become idolaters; and it was a custom of the heathen nations to curse their enemies by their idols, and the King of Moab, by desiring Balaam, as a prophet of the LORD, to *curse Israel*, hoped to bring the curse of their own GOD upon that people. Observe that GOD was pleased to inspire Balaam to foretell future things, though he was not a good man; but he had nothing to do but to speak the word which GOD put in his mouth, therefore it was of no signification whether he were a good man, or a bad one. Had he been a good man he would not have *wished* to curse the people of GOD, as he certainly did. Observe, *ver. 12*, that GOD commanded Balaam positively not to go to *curse his people*. The reward of divination, *ver. 7*, signified the money Balak was to pay Balaam for prophesying. Balaam was a forcerer.

Ver.

Ver. 15 to 22. Observe, *ver. 15*, that Balak increased his offers of reward, in hopes of gaining his ends, and take notice of Balaam's answer, *ver. 18*. As GOD had commanded him *not to go*, and he had protested he *would obey the word of the LORD*, he should not have inquired of GOD any more about it, but he was tempted by the great reward Balak offered. Observe, also, that GOD permitted Balaam to *go*, but did not give him leave to *curse Israel*.

Ver. 22 to 36. GOD's anger was kindled because Balaam went not with a desire to bless the people but with the desire to gain the gifts of Balak, which he could only obtain by cursing them. It appears very surprising that Balaam's ass should *speak*; but when we consider that it was a *miracle wrought by the CREATOR*, the wonder ceases. GOD, who gave to mankind the gift of speech, could give utterance to a beast who was before dumb. Nothing is too wonderful for almighty power to bring to pass. Observe how the ass reproached Balaam for his *cruelty* towards her, and consider whether many a poor beast has not equal reason to complain; and whether, from the miracle wrought in favour of Balaam's ass, there be not reason to think GOD takes notice of the cruelties exercised on poor dumb beasts, and that he will punish those who use them so ill. Observe, *ver. 34*, that Balaam acknowledged he had sinned; and take notice, *ver. 35*, on what condition the LORD permitted him to go.

Ver. 36 to the end. Observe, *ver. 37*, Balak's address to Balaam, and Balak's answer, *ver. 38*. Baal, or Baal Peor, was the chief idol of the Moabites and Midianites. Balaam showed that he was not a prophet of the LORD, by going up into the high places where Baal was worshipped.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe that it was on the high places where the idol Baal was worshipped; that Balaam directed Balak to build altars and offer sacrifices. It was ranking the LORD GOD with idols to do as Balaam did, and the LORD would not speak to him there. Observe, *ver. 7 to 11*, the word which GOD put in the mouth of Balaam, and that this wicked forcerer

forcerer was obliged to pronounce *blessings* upon those he certainly wished to *curse* for the sake of worldly gain ; and also to utter a very remarkable prophecy respecting the future prosperity of the people of Israel. This proves that God overrules the designs of wicked people when he sees fit, and makes them instruments of his good providence. Observe, *ver. 10, Balaam's wish,* which proves that he was afraid of being punished in *his latter end* for his wickedness, and remember that to *die the death of the righteous,* we must live a *righteous life.*

Ver. 11 to 27. Observe, *ver. 12,* Balaam's answer to Balak, which shows that he was *compelled* by the LORD against his will to bless Israel. Consider whether Balaam would have again complied with Balak's desire if he had not wished to gain the rewards which he held out to him. Observe, also, that Balak hoped to have a *curse* pronounced on *a part of the people of Israel* at least ; and take notice of Balaam's words which he spake by divine inspiration, *ver. 18 to 25 ; ver. 21* related to the patriarch Jacob, from whom his posterity were named. He was faithful to the LORD, and abhorred idols.

Ver. 27. Observe that the King of Moab showed great obstinacy as well as cruelty, and Balaam was very presumptuous.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 15. GOD saw fit that Balaam should go on pronouncing blessings upon Israel in order to make the Moabites and the Midianites afraid of attacking them. Take particular notice of the prophecy he uttered, *ver. 3, &c.* which foretold the future prosperity and greatness of the kingdom of Israel.

Ver. 15 to the end. The last prophecy which Balaam spake before he left Balak, meant that the nations mentioned by him should be subdued by a king of Israel, and it was afterwards fulfilled by David. These prophecies show that every thing which was to happen to all these nations many ages after was known to the Almighty, and this account of Balaam and Balak proves to us that the designs and attempts of the

wicked against those who have the *blessing of God*, can do them no injury. *God ruleth all the kingdoms of the earth, and as for the way of the wicked God turneth it upside down*, as the Psalmist says, *Psalm cxlvi. ver. 9.*

CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter contains a shocking story, which shows the danger of mixing with wicked people. Observe, *ver. 9*, what numbers of the Israelites were cut off by the plague for joining with the worshippers of Baal Peor. These were the last that remained of the generation which came out of the land of Egypt; the Israelites now consisted of their children whom the LORD had promised to bring into the land of Canaan instead of their fathers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 5. As Moses was shortly to die, and the people to enter the promised land, the LORD saw fit they should be *numbered*, that, in the division to be made of the land of Canaan, every tribe might have a portion assigned it.

Ver. 5 to the end. Observe here, that the numbers of the different tribes were much the same as at the first numbering of them forty years before when they came out of Egypt. The nation was not increased in the wilderness, because God, during their wandering, destroyed all who at their coming out of Egypt were above twenty years old, except the two faithful spies he had promised to preserve.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 12. This chapter shows that God designed to preserve the distinction of families among the Jews.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe that the LORD showed great kindness to Moses, though he did not see fit that he should conduct the people into the land of Canaan, and Moses appears to have been perfectly resigned to death, from whence

we may judge he had hopes of being received into the heavenly Canaan. Observe, also, the great zeal of Moses for the good of the people of Israel, who had often treated him so ill, though he had been to them a true friend and a faithful mediator. The LORD's appointing Joshua to succeed Moses, showed his great regard for the happiness of the people who descended from his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

CHAPTERS XXVIII. XXIX.

These chapters contain a repetition of those laws which were given forty years before to the Israelites, *Exodus, chap. xxix. and Leviticus, chap. xxiii.*

CHAPTER XXX.

This chapter relates to vows, or *solemn promises* to GOD, and shows that GOD requires his people religiously to observe their vows and oaths.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 21. Observe that the Midianites were at that time a very idolatrous people, and their women had seduced some of the Israelites from the LORD to the sacrifices of Baal Peor. The *whole army* was not to go against them, that the victory might appear to be entirely owing to the power of the LORD. Observe that Balaam, the wicked prophet, did not *die the death of the righteous*, as he wished to do, but fell among idolaters when they were cut off by the command of the Lord.

Ver. 21 to 48. Observe in what manner the great spoil which was taken from the Midianites was divided betwixt those who went to the war, and those who stayed with the camp, and that a portion of every thing was assigned for the priests and Levites.

Ver. 48 to the end. Observe that the Israelites lost not

one man in the battle with the Midianites, which was a wonderful circumstance, and shows that the former were under the protection of the Almighty; observe also that the officers of the people presented the most valuable things as an offering unto the Lord. This victory made the Israelites to be regarded as a powerful people and enriched them greatly.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Observe, that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, desired to possess the country the Israelites had conquered on that side of the river Jordan where they then were; and *ver. 17, &c.* on what condition their request was granted. By the establishment of these tribes Moses saw before his death that God's promises respecting the land of Canaan were beginning to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 50. In these verses we have an account of the several journeys and encampments of the people of Israel during the forty years they were in the wilderness. They were obliged to remove often on account of their flocks and herds.

Ver. 50 to the end. Observe the Lord's command to the people in respect to what they were to do when they came to the land of Canaan to the idolatrous inhabitants of the countries; and also that they were to cast lots for their respective inheritances when they had driven out the heathen nations.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe, that before the people of Israel had begun to conquer the land of Canaan which was on the other side Jordan, Moses, being inspired of God, settled the bounds of the country. This shows that God, with sovereign power, disposes of the different parts of the earth according

according to his own will, putting down some kingdoms and nations, and setting up others as he sees fit. The Canaanitish nations had filled up the measure of their iniquity by their abominable idolatries and wickedness, and the Lord was going to destroy them and give their land to a nation who bore *his own name*, and were in covenant to worship him only.

Ver. 16. Observe here that the very men were named who were to divide the land among the tribes after it was conquered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe the care which God took to provide for his ministers; this should make us always ready to contribute our portion toward the maintenance of the clergy.

Ver. 9 to the end. Take notice that God made a distinction betwixt such as killed a man accidentally, and such as committed wilful murder, but the former were to live in a state of punishment. This shows what a dreadful crime murder is, and should make us carefully guard against violent passions, or any thing that may lead us to commit it,

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The design of the law in this chapter was to prevent confusion of tribes and inheritances, as God designed the distinction of tribes should continue till the coming of the Messiah, in order to prove that he was of the tribe of Judah, and the family of David.

DEUTERONOMY.

THE word *Deuteronomy*, signifies a *second law*; and this book is so called, because it is a repetition of the laws which God had given forty years before to the children of Israel after their deliverance out of the land of Egypt. It pleased the Lord that Moses should repeat these laws before his death, because those who had heard them the first time were all dead in the wilderness. This book contains also some fine exhortations addressed to the Israelites, from which Christians may receive very important instructions.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe that Moses made this speech at the end of the fortieth year, when the people of Israel, having been trained up in a right notion of the divine majesty, were about to be put in possession of the promised land. They were at this time dutiful and obedient, and fit instruments for carrying on the purpose of God's providence for destroying the idolatrous nations, and spreading the knowledge of the true God in the world.

Moses was at this time addressing the next generation to those who were brought out of the land of Egypt, and reminding them of all that the Lord had done for his people since they departed from mount Horeb.

Ver. 9 to 19. Moses here alluded to his having appointed rulers over Israel to assist him in his government, *see Exodus, chap. xviii. ver. 18, &c.*

Ver. 19 to the end. These verses refer to the sending spies to search the land, *see Numbers, chap. xiii.* Observe, *ver. 22*, that it was at the desire of the Israelites themselves the spies were sent. By the words *every one of you*, Moses meant all the people of Israel who were of age at that time.

It appears that though God chastised the Israelites in various ways, and even cut many of them off for their rebellion and disobedience, he was nevertheless true and faithful to his promises, and still careful of them as his chosen people, as their numbers showed, which were as great, when they arrived at the borders of the river Jordan, as when their fathers came out of Egypt; from whence we may observe that, in a state of disobedience, the nation was not diminished by the hand of God; they might be assured that in the prosecution of their duty they would never be destroyed by the hands of men; and the various victories they had obtained over some powerful idolatrous nations who opposed them in their way to Canaan, were sure pledges to them that they should, under the favour and protection of the LORD, conquer Canaan also. From this repetition of the LORD's dealings with the Israelites, which Moses made, Christians should learn to reflect frequently on what God has done for *them*, and should apply to *themselves* such parts of Moses' exhortation as are suitable to them, and take warning by the example of the Israelites not to rebel against the Lord their God, lest he refuse to admit them into the heavenly Canaan.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter is a continuation of Moses' history of the journeyings of the Israelites, of which an account is also given in the book of Numbers.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe the command which God had given respecting the Edomites, which shows us why the Israelites forebore to *force* their way through the land of Edom, and went round about, as related. *Numbers, chap. xx.*

Ver. 9 to 16. Observe what the Lord said about Moab, and how exactly the Lord's threatening, respecting the rebellious generation who provoked him in the wilderness, was fulfilled.

Ver. 16 to the end. What Moses said in the former part of this chapter, related to that generation of Israelites which perished in the wilderness; what follows, related to those he was then addressing. Observe, that Moses recalled to their mind the manner in which they had been directed to proceed

respecting the Ammonites who were a race of giants; also the victory they had gained over Sihon, king of the Ammonites, as related before in the *21st chapter of Numbers*; and take notice that it was the will of the Lord they should do so, and possess the land in their stead. Observe, also, *ver. 25*, that one of the judgments which the Lord sends upon the wicked is a great fear and dread of their enemies.

CHAPTER III.

The history of the Israelites is here continued. Observe what Moses said of Og, king of Bashan, *ver. 11*, which shows that he was of gigantic stature. Also, *ver. 24*, the prayer which Moses offered up to the LORD that he might be permitted to go over Jordan, and the LORD's answer, *ver. 26*, which shows that God sometimes punishes his most faithful servants for their sins in this world, both to humble them, and for a warning to others.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 25. Observe that Moses having reminded the people of Israel of the principal events that had befallen them from the time they left Egypt, proceeds in this chapter to exhort them to obedience. Read every verse with attention, for this exhortation is in many respects suitable to Christians. Remember that Christians are now the people of God; that they are required to keep the ten commandments which are the same Moses gave the Israelites. Think how some of the Israelites were punished for departing from the LORD, and how some were preserved for cleaving to him, and resolve not to forsake the LORD as long as you live. Remember that the only true wisdom is, to keep God's commandments; and that it is righteousness alone that exalteth a nation. Reflect upon the honour and privileges pointed out, in *ver. 7*, and remember that they belong to Christians as they formerly did to the Israelites, as the people of God. Observe, *ver. 9*, the beginning of this verse, and resolve to *keep thy soul diligently*. *Ver. 10*, remember the awful solemnity here mentioned,

nished, and learn to fear GOD and keep his commandments; and observe that when the LORD manifested his glorious presence upon mount Sinai, as related in the 19th chapter of *Exodus*, every circumstance was above all natural things, therefore it was impossible for men to form similitudes or representations of any part of that awful scene by pictures or images of any kind. *Ver. 15*, think how the heathen nations who worshipped images or the heavenly bodies, dishonoured GOD, and corrupted themselves; and resolve to avoid all image worship. Think how good GOD has been in redeeming you from worse than Egyptian bondage to give you a better inheritance than that of Canaan, and resolve to be grateful for his unspeakable mercy. Remember that Christians are taken into covenant with GOD *through* JESUS CHRIST. Recollect what the three things are that you have promised and vowed in the Christian covenant, and resolve to do them.

Ver. 26 to 41. Observe, here, the severe threatenings denounced against the Israelites if they broke their covenant with the LORD, and consider how these were fulfilled and are still fulfilling to the Israelites, who are now scattered among all nations. Observe, *ver. 30, 31*, the promises of mercy to those who should repent and turn to the Lord. Consider whether the Israelites were not indeed favoured above all nations, and whether Christians have not been still more favoured than they were. Observe, *ver. 37*, on what account the LORD favoured the Israelites. Consider, *ver. 39, 40*, whether these words are suitable to you.

Ver. 41 to the end. Observe that Moses had before received a command to do what is related in these words. See *Numbers, chap. xxxv.*

CHAPTER V.

Moses repeated the law to the Israelites that they might know that it was not made for their fathers only, but for all GOD's people from generation to generation; and many of those to whom he addressed his exhortation were probably present when the LORD gave the LAW from mount Sinai; for it was those only who were twenty years old and upwards,
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DEUTERONOMY.

when they came out of the land of Egypt, who perished in the wilderness. Remember that this law concerns Christians as much as it did the Jews, for we are bound by the vow made at our baptism, to *keep GOD's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our lives.* Observe, *ver. 27*, that the Israelites found they could not stand before GOD when he showed forth his glory on Mount Sinai, therefore they requested that Moses might be their mediator; and remember that, under the Christian dispensation, we have the SON OF GOD for our *mediator.* Take notice of GOD's words, *ver. 29*, which shows the tender kindness of our heavenly Father. Observe, also, *ver. 32, 33*, how GOD requires his commandments to be kept,

CHAPTER VI.

Observe, *ver. 2, 5*, that the Israelites were required to *fear* GOD, and to *love* him, and consider if it be not the duty of Christians to do the same. Observe, *ver. 6*, what parents are commanded to do, and consider if it be not the duty of Christian parents to teach their children the commandments of the LORD, and of children to learn them diligently. Observe, *ver. 10 to 13*, the caution Moses gave to the Israelites, and beware, in the *day of prosperity*, lest you *forget the LORD* who delivered you from the *bondage of sin.* Solemn oaths are administered to Christians in the name of the same LORD, by whom the Israelites were commanded to *swear.* If you should have occasion to take such a solemn oath, remember you are bound to perform it, *as you hope GOD to help you.* Observe, *ver. 17, 18*, and *do that which is right and good*, if you wish to enter heaven. If you should have children, teach them as Moses exhorted the Israelites to teach theirs, *ver. 20, 21*; but as a Christian you must tell your children, what great things GOD has done for mankind in delivering them from the *bondage of sin and the slavery of SATAN.* Teach them also the history of CHRIST, and talk to them frequently of the *blessings of redemption and the resurrection to life eternal through the merits of a crucified REDEEMER.* And fail not to instruct them that, if we believe in our Redeemer, this faith,
if

if it brings forth the fruits of *good works*, will be reckoned to us for *righteousness*, as Abraham's was. See *Genesis*, chap. xv. ver. 6.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe that Moses here names the same nations whose land the LORD promised Abraham he would give to his posterity, and that the Israelites were commanded not to show mercy to these nations, because it was the will of God they should be cut off for their abominable wickedness. Observe, *ver. 4*, why the Israelites were not to make marriages with these people, and recollect the sad consequences of the *sons of God* (that is religious people) marrying among the *sons of men* (that is wicked people) before the flood. See *Genesis*, chap. vi. Also the punishment which the LORD inflicted upon the Israelites when they suffered themselves to be persuaded by the Midianitish women to join themselves to Baal Peor. *Numbers*, chap. xxv.

Ver. 6 to 12 show why the LORD chose the Israelites as *his people*, and why he did not destroy them as a nation when they rebelled against him. In like manner it is not for any merit of *their own* that mankind are taken into the *Christian covenant*, but from the *free grace of God*. Think what a comfort it is to *have the LORD for your God*, and trust in his divine promises. Think of God's hatred to sin, and fear to be wicked.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe what *gracious promises* the LORD made to the *house of Israel*, and remember that to *Christians* he has made still better promises, for the first related to *temporal blessings*, but the hopes of Christians are *eternal*. Observe, *ver. 22*, why the LORD did not put his people in immediate possession of the land of Canaan; and *ver. 25*, that every thing gained by breaking God's commandment is an *accursed thing*; it cannot be enjoyed with the *blessing of God*; therefore a Christian never should bring such abominations into his house.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. We should learn from these verses to meditate upon the mercies of GOD, and in particular to consider the trials we meet with, as Moses recommends, *ver. 5*, and to improve them accordingly. When we suffer under these trials we should, as Christians, look forward to the *heavenly Canaan*, where everlasting happiness is laid up for those who go through the trials of this short life with faith and patience.

Ver. 10 to the end. From these verses we should learn to *blefs the LORD* in time of prosperity, and we should remember that every blessing we enjoy is the gift of his bounty, taking particular care never to ascribe our success to our own power, wisdom, or industry; but always remembering who bestowed upon us the power, the wisdom, and the strength. We should, also, remember that a worse punishment than was threatened to the Israelites, *ver. 19, 20*, awaits those who break GOD's *everlasting covenant*.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe that Moses again reminded the Israelites that it was not because they were more righteous than other nations, but on account of his covenant with their forefathers and the wickedness of the Canaanites, that GOD had chosen them; and recollect that *heaven* is not promised to Christians for their *own righteousness* but for *the sake of their Redeemer*.

Ver. 7 to the end. These verses refer to circumstances which are related in the *Book of Exodus*, *chap. xiv. xvi. xvii. and xxiv. xxxii. xxxiv.* The account which Moses gives of himself shows that he was a faithful mediator. This portion of Scripture should put you in mind of your own numberless offences. Think how often you have sinned against GOD's commandments, and what would have become of you if you had not had as a mediator the SON OF GOD, who intercedes in behalf of sinners in regard to
their

their eternal interests, as Moses interceded for the people of Israel in respect to temporal things.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe that GOD was reconciled to the people of Israel through the intercession of Moses, after their great sin in worshipping the *golden calf*; and we may assure ourselves that the intercession of CHRIST will prevail in our behalf if we truly repent of our sins, and trust in him as our *mediator*. Observe the provision made for God's ministers.

Ver. 12 to the end. Consider well this portion of Scripture and apply it to yourself. Remember that you are to *love* GOD, to *fear him*, to *walk in his ways*, and to *love your fellow-creatures*, for so our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as well as Moses, has taught us. Observe what is said, *ver. 18, 19*, concerning *strangers*, as well as *widows* and *fatherless children*, and learn from it to be kind to foreigners who are at a distance from their own country and relations; but particularly prisoners and negro slaves, from whom we cannot withhold food and raiment without offending GOD.

From the last verse we may judge that though the number of the men of Israel fit to bear arms, did not exceed that of the former generation, there was a very considerable number of children and young persons at the time Moses spoke this exhortation.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, *ver. 9*, that as the Israelites could have no hope of entering the land of Canaan, unless they loved GOD and kept his commandments; neither are Christians to expect to *enter heaven* but upon these terms.

Ver. 10 to 26. These verses should lead us to consider that the *heavenly Canaan*, which is to us the *land of promise*, far exceeds all that can be found in this world. We should therefore *take heed to ourselves to keep GOD's commandments*, that we may through JESUS CHRIST obtain an inheritance there. Christians should also take heed that they do not bring
upon

upon themselves *a curse* instead of *a blessing*—and those who are parents should follow the counsel of Moses, *ver. 19*. What is said, *ver. 18*, respecting *a sign upon the hand*, and *frontlets between the eyes*, related wholly to Jewish customs.

Ver. 26 to the end. Observe, *ver. 27, 28*, and remember that *a blessing* and *a curse* are set before you as a Christian upon the same terms. In imitation of the ceremony commanded in *ver. 29*, we have an office in our church for the purpose of denouncing God's anger against sinners, which is used on the *first day of Lent*, called *Ash Wednesday*, which all Christians would do well to attend to.

CHAPTER XII.

Observe that as it was the practice of heathens to worship idols in groves and on high places, God charged his people, *ver. 4, 5, 6*, to have *a fixed place* of worship. This could not be done in the wilderness for the reason given, *ver. 9*; yet the people was not even then to offer public worship to the LORD in a place of their own choosing, but where the cloudy pillar rested; neither where they afterwards to follow their own will and offer their sacrifices in any place they thought fit. We may learn from this that the people of God are to serve him in his *appointed way*, namely, by having fixed places of worship, and regularly ordained ministers, not according to their own imaginations; and *ver. 12*, teaches us that we ought to take care of the ministers of religion. From *ver. 29*, we should learn carefully to avoid all idolatrous practices. Observe, *ver. 31*, the abominations of the heathen nations, and remember it was for these things they were to be cut off.

CHAPTER XIII.

The commandments in this chapter relating to idolatrous persons and cities, were designed for the Jews only. Christians have no commission from God as the Israelites had to cut off particular nations for their wickedness; on the contrary, they are commanded to make use of the gentlest means

to prevent the spreading of false doctrines, and to propagate the gospel. Besides, the heathens in general of the present day, are very different from those who inhabited the land of Canaan. Many of them are poor ignorant creatures who know no better than to worship idols; but those nations which the Israelites were commanded to cut off were presumptuous sinners, who set themselves up against the LORD when he was proving himself by miraculous works to be the only true GOD.

CHAPTER XIV.

The laws in this chapter were designed for the Jews only. *Ver. 1*, referred to a custom among the heathens, and the commandments respecting *clean* and *unclean animals*, were designed to keep the LORD's people entirely separate from idolaters. Observe that the people were strictly enjoined to pay the ministers of religion their due, and to provide for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; duties which are equally incumbent upon Christians.

CHAPTER XV.

The laws in this chapter were designed to make the condition of servants and slaves comfortable, and to keep their masters from being rigid and unkind. Christians may take instruction from some of the precepts, particularly *ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11*.

CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter relates entirely to Jewish institutions.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe what is here said respecting the *feast of the passover*, on what occasion it was ordained, how it was to be observed, and where it was to be kept.

Ver. 9 to 13. Observe what is said concerning the *feast of weeks*.

Ver. 13 to 18. Observe what is said concerning the *feast of*
of

of tabernacles, and who were required to go at these three festivals to the place appointed by the LORD for offering the sacrifices. *Ver. 18.* Observe that the Israelites were commanded to appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice among them: indeed, society cannot subsist without a regular government. The wicked part of the world would get the better of the good if there were no laws to restrain them, and laws would be useless without magistrates to put them in execution.

CHAPTER XVII.

The laws in this chapter were suited to the Israelites, but Christians may learn from them to submit to the government they live under and to be obedient and peaceful subjects. The latter part of this chapter shows that God foreknew what the Israelites would do at a future time in respect to desiring a king, which came to pass in the days of the prophet Samuel. Observe the directions which the LORD gave concerning the Israelites choosing a king, and the rules which the kings of Israel were to follow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. The laws respecting the priests and Levites in these verses show that it is the will of GOD, that those who serve in the sacred ministry should be supported by the church.

Ver. 9 to 15. This part of the chapter relates to the practice of the heathen nations, some of whom burnt their sons and daughters in sacrifice to an idol called Moloch; and idolatrous priests in general practised magical arts, and pretended to foretel future events by having intercourse with familiar spirits; but it cannot be thought GOD would permit devils, or wicked men, to know those things he saw fit to keep secret. Consider whether if it was sinful in the Jews to consult these wizards and conjurers, it must not be equally so in Christians; and let this keep you from going to fortune-tellers, and cunning men, as they are called.

Ver. 15 to 20. Observe that a very remarkable prophecy is

is contained in these verses, which in the New Testament is applied to our blessed Saviour, *see St. John's Gospel, chap. v. ver. 45, 46.* Take notice that this prophet was to be like Moses, and remember that Moses differed from the other prophets in two very material points, he was a *lawgiver* and a *mediator*, as he brought in the law of the *old covenant*. The great prophet CHRIST was to bring in that of the *new covenant*; as Moses was the *MEDIATOR of the old covenant*, the great prophet was to be the *MEDIATOR of the new covenant*. Take notice that this prophet was to *arise among the Israelites* and to *speak the words of GOD*; and observe, that whosoever should not receive the doctrine of this great lawgiver and mediator, would incur the displeasure of GOD.

Ver. 20 to the end. These verses contain a caution respecting false prophets, of whom there were afterwards numbers in the world.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter relates entirely to the Israelites, but there are laws among Christians for the punishment of *murder* and *perjury*, and it is as great a sin in a Christian, as it was in an Israelite, to *remove his neighbour's land-mark*, or to injure him in any way.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 5. This chapter contains the military laws of the people of Israel. Observe here the priest's exhortation to the people when they were going to war, which was intended to remind them that they could not overcome their enemies but by the power of the Lord; and that the Lord is the giver of victory.

Ver. 5 to 10. Observe that people, under various circumstances, were excused from going to the battle.

Ver. 10 to 19. Observe, that before a war was begun against any city, peace was to be offered to it by the Israelites upon condition that it would become tributary to them, that is, submit to them, and pay a yearly tribute; but that if

the people of the city would not accept these terms the Israelites were to cut off all the men and spare the women and children, excepting those belonging to the nations mentioned, *ver.* 19, which were the same whose land the LORD had promised to their forefather Abraham for his posterity, and who had filled up the measure of their iniquity at the time the Lord commanded his people to cut them off.

Ver. 19 to the end. Take notice of these verses, and if you should hereafter, as a soldier, be concerned in besieging a city, remember never wantonly to destroy what God has made for the food of man. The rule indeed may be extended to those who are not soldiers, as it is no uncommon thing in times of scarcity for poor people, who are ill advised by evil-minded men, to destroy corn, and other fruits of the earth, by burning barns and stacks, &c.; which is only increasing the distress of the country, and depriving some of God's creatures of the food provided for their sustenance.

CHAPTER XXI.

The laws in this chapter relate to Jewish affairs only. Observe, *ver.* 18, that the Mosaic law was very severe against a stubborn and rebellious son, which shows that undutifulness to parents is a heinous sin in the sight of God. It is a breach of the fifth commandment.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 8. The laws contained in this chapter were also made expressly for the Israelites, but there are many precepts which are equally suitable to Christians, as they enjoined the practice of humanity and brotherly kindness, which the gospel recommends in the fullest extent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The laws in this chapter related also entirely to the Israelites.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The latter part of this chapter, from *ver.* 14, shows the care that GOD required the Israelites to take of the poor, particularly in the time of harvest. What is here required of the Jews, is usually observed by Christians, though there is no express law for it, and therefore it should be regarded by the poor as an *indulgence*, not a *right*. The beginning of this chapter related entirely to the Israelites.

CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter, to *ver.* 17, was written expressly for the Israelites.

Ver. 17 to the end. Recollect the circumstance here alluded to, in *Exodus*, xvii. *ver.* 8. The curse renewed on the Amalekites, *ver.* 18, shows that GOD cuts off *nations* as well as *individuals* for presumptuous sin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 12. Though the ceremonies in this chapter were appointed for the Israelites only, Christians should learn from them to be grateful to GOD for his bountiful gifts, and to confess that they are indebted to his goodness for every blessing they enjoy; also, that they should set apart a portion of what is bestowed upon them for the relief of the poor and needy. Instead of the words which the Israelite was to say when he presented his offering, *ver.* 5 to 12, the Christian may say, "LORD, when mankind were sinners and slaves to Satan, thou of thy grace and goodness didst mercifully deliver them, and sentest a REDEEMER to bring us salvation and conduct us to the HEAVENLY CANAAN; blessed be thy name, O LORD!"

Ver. 12 to 16. After paying the ministers of the LORD their just due, and relieving the poor and needy, the Christian may say, "I have done, O LORD, as thou commandest; look

down, I beseech thee, from thy holy habitation, and bestow thy blessing upon me !”

Ver. 16 to the end. When you have read these verses, consider that the Christian has *statutes* and *ordinances* to observe as well as the Israelites, and resolve to keep them with all your heart, and with all your soul, and remember, also, that Christians are now the peculiar people of GOD, and under a solemn vow to keep his commandments; that they are high above all other people as belonging to the SON OF GOD, and that they ought to have a constant regard to the honour of GOD in all their words and actions, and not bring dishonour upon their holy religion by wicked practices.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter shows that those only who keep GOD's commandments are reckoned his *peculiar people*, and that those who wilfully break them are *accursed*, or *cut off*, from being his people. There is an office for the Christian church in the Common Prayer Book, which answers to the ceremonies at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the COMMINATION, or *denouncing of GOD's judgments against sinners, to be used on the first day of Lent, commonly called ASH WEDNESDAY.* Observe that the people of Israel were required to say *amen*, as an acknowledgment that the curse of GOD was due; and Christians certainly ought to do the same when the minister reads the Commination; but some people entertain an absurd notion that by doing so they curse their neighbours, whereas they do nothing more than confess that those who commit the sins named in the Commination bring the curse of GOD upon themselves, which may be clearly proved from the Scriptures.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This chapter shows what BLESSINGS the Israelites were to expect for *obedience*, and what CURSES for *disobedience to the LAW OF GOD.* Observe that these were *temporal blessings and curses*, but that, under the gospel, *eternal ones* are promised and

and threatened; but frequently God, of his grace and goodness, adds temporal blessings to good people; and sometimes he sends temporal judgments as chastisements to bring sinners to repentance; but when these blessings are not given, Christians should not be discouraged, because greater blessings are in store for them, neither should they think that their sufferings in this world will exempt them from the punishment of the next, for while they continue in wickedness without repentance, they are under the curse of God, and if they die so they will be condemned to everlasting misery.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1. This verse appears to belong to the former chapter.

Ver. 2 to 10. Observe that Moses reminds the people of the wonders God has wrought for them, in order to induce them to renew their covenant with a devout and willing mind.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe that not only men and women of all descriptions, but children also were included in the covenant which made them the people of the LORD, and that the children which were yet unborn, and who should come into the world while that covenant was in force, were to be reckoned among God's peculiar people. This doubtless is the case in respect to the Christian covenant.

Observe, *ver. 12 to 13*, what a solemn thing it is to be in covenant with God, and what an abomination idolatry is. Take warning, by *ver. 19, 20*, and the following verses to 26, and do not think God will let you, as a Christian, have *that peace which passeth all understanding*, while you continue to act contrary to your solemn vow at your baptism. Observe, *ver. 29*, and be contented and thankful for the things which God has graciously revealed in the Scriptures, and do not desire to penetrate into those he has seen fit to conceal.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 11. All that Moses in the name of the LORD threatened in this and the foregoing chapters, the Israelites afterwards

afterwards brought upon themselves by their ingratitude and disobedience; and many of the LORD's gracious promises to his ancient people have been fulfilled, as we may be certain the rest will be at the proper time. In the New Testament, forgiveness, and the return of God's blessings, are promised to the penitent; all which shows that the LORD is, what he declared himself to be when he proclaimed his name to Moses, *merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, though not without repentance and atonement. See Exodus, chap. xxxiv. ver. 6, 7.*

Ver. 11 to the end. These verses may be applied to the Christian covenant as well as to that with the Israelites. Eternal death and life are in the New Testament plainly set before us. We are plainly told that if we keep God's commandments he will bless us and admit us to heaven; and that if we turn away from them, entirely forsake our God and Saviour, we shall perish everlastingly. Consider then which you ought to choose, *eternal death and misery, or everlasting life and happiness.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe that Moses repeated the promises of God in order to encourage the Israelites, and to engage them to serve God with all their heart and soul; and that he assured them Joshua should bring them into the land of Canaan. Remember God's better promises to Christians, that you may have courage to fight manfully against your spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and prove yourself worthy of the great Captain of your salvation, who will conduct the faithful after this life is ended to the heavenly Canaan.

Ver. 9 to 14. Observe here, that at the solemn reading of the law, all the people, men, women, and children, were to be gathered together, and for what purpose; and remember that Christian congregations are to be formed in like manner, and for the like purpose, namely, *that they may learn to fear the LORD and keep his commandments*; and be sure to embrace every opportunity in your power for hearing the word of God.

Ver.

Ver. 14 to 22. Observe the prophecy of the LORD, *ver. 16*, which shows that the LORD knew that the people would forsake his worship and go after idols; and take notice of what the LORD threatened to do in this case; also, what he appointed as a standing witness against them to remind them of their ingratitude, and think how wonderful it is that God should know all things that *will be*, as well as those that *are*, or *have been*.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe that Moses wrote not only the *song*, but also the *book of the law*, which contained all the ordinances of God that are recorded in this book of Deuteronomy. Take notice where this holy book was deposited, *ver. 26*, and observe the prophecy at the end of the chapter, which, together with others, shew that Moses was certainly inspired.

CHAPTER XXXII.

This chapter contains the song which God commanded Moses to write, that it might be a witness against the people of Israel whenever they rebelled against the LORD their God. *See the former chapter, ver. 19.* The words of this divine song were certainly dictated by the HOLY SPIRIT, and they are very sublime and awful. The song is written in figurative language, and as it was designed for the Israelites only, there is no occasion to explain it particularly; but Christians may learn from it not to make ungrateful returns to God for his goodness, but to use all the blessings, temporal and spiritual, which he bestows upon them to his glory, and never to forsake their SAVIOUR, lest they provoke God to send more dreadful judgments upon them than are here threatened to the Israelites. Think what a dreadful thing it is to provoke the LORD to anger. Observe the judgments which He threatened to the Israelites. Observe, also, the kindness of God, *ver. 29*, which shows that the LORD has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that those who perish do so by their own faults. Think how the Israelites must be affected in after times when, under the judgments of God, they called to mind the words of this song.

Ver. 44 to the end. Observe Moses' exhortation, and remember

member that our eternal life, as Christians, depends upon our keeping the law of the gospel. At the end of the last chapter we read that Moses having finished his exhortation, was called upon to prepare for death.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

This chapter contains the last blessing which the great law-giver, Moses, gave to the people of Israel before his departure from this life. Observe that this great prophet spake to each of the tribes reminding some of what had happened; and foretelling to others what would happen. It is not necessary to explain this blessing, particularly as it related to the Israelites only; but you may observe that Moses showed himself a faithful mediator to the last, by expressing the utmost zeal for the service of God, and tenderness for the people of Israel. Take particular notice of the last verse, and think of your superior happiness in being a Christian, that *your spirit may rejoice in God your Saviour.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Observe that Moses was favoured with a view of the promised land, though he was not permitted to enter it. If the LORD had not concealed the body of Moses, the Israelites would probably have worshipped it as they were so prone to idolatry. Observe, also, that he died in his full strength, *ver. 7.* As he died in the favour of God he doubtless was admitted into the heavenly Canaan, and we read of his appearing with Elias at the transfiguration of our blessed Saviour. Recollect that the people of Israel had great reason to mourn for Moses, for, under God, he had been their deliverer and their lawgiver, and on all occasions a faithful and zealous friend, and mediator. It is the duty of Christians to honour Moses as the greatest of the prophets, for through him they received that LAW which he received from God, and which by him was committed to writing. We ought also to follow the example of Moses in faith, meekness, zeal, and

and diligence ; and to believe his doctrine and the prophecy he left respecting our BLESSED REDEEMER.

Ver. 9 to the end. Observe, that after the death of Moses, Joshua was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT with wisdom, and that this inspiration was given when Moses laid his hands upon Joshua, as the person who was to succeed him as leader of the people Israel. Take notice, also, of what is said of Moses, *ver. 10 to the end.*

JOSHUA.

THIS book gives an account of the Israelites conquering the land of Canaan under the conduct of Joshua; it contains the history of about seventeen years.

Before we begin the history of Joshua it is proper to observe that it was principally for the sake of putting down idols, and showing that the LORD alone was GOD, that the Israelites were to conquer Canaan; so that the war which Joshua and the Israelites were to carry on, was a *holy war*, in which the worshippers of the LORD were on one side, and the worshippers of *idols* on the other. The first were a set of inexperienced men fighting on foot; the others expert in all the arts of war, having horses and chariots in abundance, and numerous armies of well-disciplined troops. Keep these particulars in mind.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe that Joshua was ordained by the LORD himself to be the leader of the people of Israel after Moses. This shows that GOD never forsakes his church and people, but when he takes to himself any of his faithful servants, he raises up others in their stead, and endues them with the gifts of his Holy Spirit. Take notice of GOD's promise to Joshua at the latter end of *ver. 5*, and observe what GOD required of Joshua.

Ver. 10, 11. Observe, also, Joshua's command to the officers of the people of Israel, which showed his faith in the word of the LORD.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe Joshua's charge to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, and their ready compliance, by which they fulfilled the engagements they entered into, when Moses, by the LORD's permission, gave them the cities
which

which were taken from Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. See *Numbers, chap. xxxii.* These examples should teach us to submit to our rulers, and to help our brethren in every just cause.

CHAPTER II.

Joshua sent spies to Jericho, that they by their report might encourage the people to go up against the land of Canaan; also to give Rahab an opportunity of showing, that, though she dwelt among idolaters, she believed in the LORD GOD. Observe what she said to the spies, *ver. 10, 11*, which proves that she had a strong faith in the GOD of Israel. On this account she might fairly be regarded not as a Canaanite but as a convert to the true religion. She acknowledged the LORD to be the only GOD, and believed that he had given the land of Canaan to his people; and in concealing the spies she acted as became a servant of GOD under those particular circumstances. It was to save the life of good people that she deceived those who would have killed them. Rahab is mentioned by St. Paul in *the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, ver. 31*, in a very honourable manner. Observe, *ver. 9*, that the LORD had sent *his terror* upon the inhabitants of Canaan, as he promised to do; see *Exodus, chap. xxiii. ver. 27*, the nature of which may be understood by *ver. 11* of the present chapter. By binding the scarlet line in the windows, Rahab not only showed that she believed the men would be true to their word, but she gave a proof of her faith in the power of the LORD GOD. Observe, *ver. 23*, that the spies made a faithful report.

CHAPTER III.

As the war which was to be carried on in the land of Canaan might properly be called the *war of the LORD*, he went himself before his people as the LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH; and to make both the Israelites and the idolatrous nations sensible that he was so, he commanded the Ark, the symbol of his presence, and in which the law was kept, to be carried

carried by the priests towards that land where he had determined to fix it ; and the LORD plainly showed by various miracles that his presence was constantly with the Ark. Observe that the miracle recorded in this chapter was of the same nature with that which God had wrought forty years before for the former generation of Israelites at the Red Sea, when they came out of Egypt, and it served to prove that the LORD was still among his people ; and to assure them that he would most certainly give them the land of Canaan. Observe, likewise, that this miracle served to increase *the terror* which the LORD had before sent as a judgment upon the wicked Canaanites. By the waters of Jordan stopping as soon as the feet of the priests, who bore the ark, entered the water, God taught the Israelites that it would be by his power that the Canaanites would be subdued, and that their glory consisted in having the LORD God among them. The passage opened for the Israelites was about eighteen miles in breadth. Consider how wonderful it must have been to see the waters of a large river stopped suddenly in their course, leaving a broad space of dry ground for an army to pass over ; and whether any but Almighty God could have wrought such a miracle. It was in this very river that our blessed Saviour was afterwards baptized by John the Baptist.

CHAPTER IV.

The return of the waters of Jordan was as miraculous as the dividing of them ; the power of the LORD was equally displayed on both occasions. Joshua's setting up stones as memorials of the wonderful miracle that had been wrought, teaches us that we ought to perpetuate the memory of the mercies of God, and that we should carefully instruct children in the histories and truths of religion, that they may be trained up betimes in the fear and love of God.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, *ver. 1.*, the effect which the miracle of dividing Jordan had upon the wicked Canaanites. Circumcision was
restored

restored to the Israelites that it might be a sign to distinguish the people of God from idolaters. Observe, *ver.* 10, at what place the people stopped, and the feast which they celebrated there, what they eat, and consider how wonderful it was that manna should fall every day for the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness, and cease from falling as soon as they had gained footing in Canaan. The *captain of the LORD's host* could be no other than the LORD GOD; the same Divine Being who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Observe his words to Joshua, *ver.* 15, and compare them with *Exodus*, *chap.* iii. *ver.* 5, 6. The LORD appeared to Joshua under the character of *captain of the LORD's host*, to assure him that he would fight for his people as he had formerly done against the Egyptians.

CHAPTER VI.

The taking of Jericho, the first city which the people of Israel went against in the land of Canaan, was attended with very remarkable circumstances, which proved that it was the LORD's doing. Observe, that after the people had passed over Jordan they were commanded to compass the city for seven days successively. While the LORD thus delayed his judgments, the king and people of Jericho had time to reflect upon the miracle by which the Israelites had got footing in their country. By sending the priests with the ark before the army of Israel, the LORD proved that he was in truth the *captain of their host*, and the LORD also showed to the heathen, by the walls falling down as they did, that those who came against them were under the immediate direction and guidance of the God whom they worshipped and adored. This amazing overthrow is supposed to have happened on the sabbath-day, which showed plainly that it was a judgment inflicted for the contempt thrown on God and religion. Observe, also, that Joshua, the priests, and all the people, gave a strong proof of their faith by compassing the walls of Jericho seven times as the LORD commanded, they showed that they believed his holy word, and they were rewarded accordingly. This is noticed by St. Paul in the *eleventh chapter of the Hebrews*, *ver.* 30.

Observe,

Observe, *ver. 17*, that Rahab and all her father's household were preserved and received among the people of God. This shows that God will not fail to reward those who testify by *their works a true faith* in him. The other inhabitants of Jericho were destroyed on account of their abominable wickedness. Those things which the LORD had commanded to be destroyed were *accursed things*, none of them could be preserved without breaking the commandment of God, *ver. 17, 18*. The LORD forbade the people to take any of the spoil of Jericho, but commanded them to dedicate it to him as a testimony that they ascribed the victory to his almighty power. Observe, that Joshua, *in the name of the LORD*, pronounced a curse upon the man who should rebuild the city; what he foretold of this man was fulfilled above 500 years afterwards in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. See *1 Kings, chap. xvi. ver. 34*.

CHAPTER VII.

We read, in *chap. vi. ver. 18*, that whosoever should take of the accursed thing would make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble Israel. Observe what the desire of riches led Achan to do. He did it secretly, but the LORD brought his wickedness to light. This sin was *sacrilege*, or *robbing God*, for the things he took the LORD had commanded to be dedicated to himself. The punishment of Achan, and the calamity which fell upon Israel, were designed to teach them that if they did not reverence the commandments of God they should not prosper. Christians should consider every thing as *accursed* which they cannot obtain and enjoy with the *blessing of God*, and should remember that whatsoever they possess has either the *blessing, or curse of God*, attending it. Achan's family most likely were included in his crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 30. Observe that when the man who had brought the LORD's curse upon the Israelites was put to death, the curse was removed, and the people were victorious over their enemies.

enemies. On this occasion it was the LORD's will that the people of Israel should take the city of Ai by force of arms, and not expect a miracle, for they were appointed to destroy the idolatrous nations, and the Lord required them to take pains to do so in obedience to his commands, excepting on particular occasions.

Ver. 30 to the end. Observe that after the people had gained these victories, Joshua caused the LAW to be written, and the BLESSINGS and CURSES to be pronounced as Moses had directed, *Deuteronomy, chap. xxvii.* This Joshua did in obedience to the command of GOD, to engage the Israelites to walk in the laws of the LORD, and to testify their thankfulness at the time the promises were fulfilling. After signal victories it is the custom in Christian countries to have days of public thanksgiving; on these occasions men, women, and children, should assemble together in places of public worship, to join in giving glory and praise to GOD who is the giver of all victory; but unless the hope of hearing some famous preacher draws them to church, many people are apt to think they are not concerned in these thanksgivings, especially the poor, who feeling the pressure of poverty to a greater degree in time of war, imagine they have nothing to be thankful for, not considering how much worse it would be for every individual in a whole nation, were a cruel enemy to be permitted to conquer the fleets and armies which are sent against it.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe that the Gibeonites were not so presumptuously wicked as the other inhabitants of Canaan, but they were guilty of a great sin in using falsehood and deceit to prevail on Joshua to make peace with them, for which they were justly punished by being condemned to draw water and to hew wood for the congregation at the great feasts, when all the men of Israel were to assemble to offer sacrifices in the place which the LORD should choose. See *Deuteronomy, chap. xii. ver. 5 to 13.* Joshua certainly acted very wrong in making a league with these people without first inquiring the will of the LORD; but after having taken a solemn oath to let them live, it would have been sinful in him to put them

to

to death. This lesson should teach Christians to be very careful how they form intimate connections with strangers; and should caution them not to bind themselves with an oath to do any thing unless they are certain it is agreeable to GOD's will and commandments, which may be known from the Scriptures.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe that as Joshua had made a league with the Gibeonites he was bound to defend them against the kings who had confederated against them to cut them off; and the LORD showed that it was agreeable to his holy will that Joshua should keep his engagements with those who were incorporated with his own people.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe that the confederated kings were all Canaanites, and that they, and their subjects, were devoted to destruction for their abominable idolatries, therefore the LORD not only commanded his people to go against them, but wrought miracles to prove that his hand was against them.

Ver. 12 to 15. The three principal deities the Amorites worshipped were the *sun*, *moon*, and *heavens*, or air. To prove that these were no gods, but creatures under the entire command of the only true GOD, the LORD sent a dreadful storm which destroyed many of them; and He caused the sun to stop till the rest were vanquished; and that they might not think this happened by chance, Joshua was inspired to offer up the prayer in *ver. 12*.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe how speedily Joshua and the Israelites conquered Canaan; this should convince us of the truth of GOD's promises, and assure us that the blessing of GOD every where accompanies those who trust in him and obey his commandments.

CHAPTER XI.

The king of Jabin, and those who joined with him, thought that the kings of the south had been defeated because they went out in small parties, they therefore took a different method,

method, *ver.* 4. This army is said, by a Jewish writer, to have consisted of three hundred thousand footmen, and twenty thousand chariots, but the LORD commanded his people to attack them, and showed, by the victory he gave them, that no king can be saved by the multitude of an host. Observe, that it was by the express commandment of the LORD, and to put a stop to idolatry for the benefit of the world, that the Israelites were commanded utterly to destroy the Canaanites; but it would be very wrong for any people, without such a command from the LORD himself, to do the things as the Israelites did. See, in *Deuteronomy*, *chap.* vii. God's commandments in respect to the idolatrous nations.

CHAPTER XII.

Observe, that the land of Canaan, inhabited by the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which God had promised to Abraham for his posterity, was, in the days of Joshua, divided among *thirty-one kings*, each of whom reigned over a separate district or division. All these the Israelites, by the power of the LORD, subdued, and he blessed their arms and wrought many wonders for them as he had promised.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. God told the people of Israel by the mouth of Moses, *Deut. chap.* vii. *ver.* 22, that he would not put them in possession of the *whole land of Canaan at once*, lest, being few in number in proportion to so large a country, they should not be able to fill it with inhabitants, and the beasts of the field should increase upon them and overrun them, and we find that they drove out the heathen by degrees. In this chapter we read of many other nations besides the five expressly mentioned to Abraham, which were to be conquered by the Israelites.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that the latter part of this chapter describes the boundaries of the land on the other side

Jordan, which Moses gave to the two tribes and a half before the people passed through to attack Jericho.

CHAPTER XIV.

Observe, that Caleb and Joshua were the two faithful spies who brought a good account of the land of Canaan, *see Numbers, chap. xiv. ver. 24, 30*, and that they were the only two of the men who came out of the land of Egypt, who entered into the land of Canaan. Caleb was eighty-five years old, yet he remained in full strength. This was an extraordinary blessing, and the very place he desired to have for his inheritance was granted to him. This shows that God blesses his faithful servants and fulfils his promises to them.

CHAPTER XV.

In this chapter, and the four following ones, we have an account of the different lots which were appointed by the LORD for the nine tribes and a half who had passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan, describing the borders of each tribe and the cities included in each lot. Observe, that a great number of cities were allotted to Judah, which was to be the principal tribe. Observe, also, that Caleb's inheritance was in their tribe; what is mentioned concerning Othniel happened after Joshua's death. *See Judges, chap. i. ver. 12, 13.*

CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter describes the borders of the intended lots of the tribes of Ephraim, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

CHAPTER XVII.

Observe, that the people of Ephraim and Manasseh being much straitened for room, Joshua told them to take in the land

land of the Perizzites and Rephaims, which he assured them they should conquer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Observe, that as soon as the people had gained a settlement in the land of Canaan, the TABERNACLE was set up at Shiloh, and there it remained till the time of the prophet Samuel, about three hundred and thirty years ; also, that the tribes did not all immediately take possession of their inheritances. In many places they had to drive out the idolatrous inhabitants, which some were backward to do, but Joshua urged them on ; and, take notice, *ver.* 8, 10, that the casting lots was a solemn ceremony. Joshua is said to have cast lots for the people before the LORD ; and their submitting to this mode of division showed their faith and trust in God, while the manner in which the lots fell to each tribe showed that the LORD directed this matter ; it certainly could not happen by *chance* that the lots should thus fall to each tribe just as Jacob and Moses had foretold.

CHAPTER XIX.

Observe, *ver.* 49, that the land which Joshua particularly desired was allotted to him. Observe, also, that the lots were cast and drawn by the very persons named before by Moses, *Numbers, chap.* xxxiv. *ver.* 17, &c. The ceremony of casting lots was performed in the most solemn manner at the door of the tabernacle ; the lots were put into the lap of the high priest by Joshua, and drawn out by the heads of the tribes, and what was written in each lot determined not only the portion of each tribe, but of each separate family. God was pleased that this division should be made while Joshua, and Eleazar, and the Elders of the people, were living, to prevent disputes afterwards, and to keep up the distinction of tribes, which was to continue till the coming of the MESSIAH, and also that, for the better security of the country, each tribe might defend its own property.

CHAPTER XX.

Observe, that even the accidental killing of a man was punished by banishment, and obliged the person who did it to leave his family and possessions; which shows that manslaughter is a crime in the sight of God. If there had not been some law against it, the people would not have been so careful of the lives of others.

CHAPTER XXI.

Observe, that the cities allotted to the Levites were in different tribes, by which means they were dispersed through the whole country for the instruction of the people in religion, and the admonishing them to be obedient to God's laws. Observe, also, that the lot of the Levites of the family of Aaron was in the principal tribe, the tribe of Judah. The care which God took of the Levites, should teach Christians to provide liberally for their spiritual guides.

Ver. 43 to the end. What is here said, related to future times, for the Israelites did not possess the whole land of Canaan till long after the death of Joshua.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 10. The two tribes and an half faithfully fulfilled the engagement they entered into, *Numbers, chap. xxxii. ver. 20*, and were then dismissed with respect, and a blessing to their possessions on the other side Jordan.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, that all the people of Israel were at this time zealously attached to the worship of the LORD God. They thought their brethren on the other side Jordan were going to corrupt and alter the worship which God himself had ordained; and they were very right in being zealous for the maintenance of the ordinances of God, but they should not have gathered themselves together to go up to war against them; it was happy for all parties that the
offended

offended tribes had prudent leaders who would hearken to reason, or there might have been a civil war, which would have brought great miseries on all the tribes. Quarrels on account of religion are usually attended with fatal consequences, and Christians should never engage in them but for the defence of their lives, but should consider all as their brethren who believe in the same GOD, and trust for salvation to the same SAVIOUR, though they may differ from them in some religious opinions.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Observe in this exhortation Joshua's zeal for the service of GOD, and his great affection for the people of Israel. The latter part of his address to the Israelites should teach us that a firm adherence to the service of GOD, and obedience to his laws, is the only way to secure the happiness of a nation; and that, on the contrary, disobedience and ungodliness deprive men of the divine favour, and bring down judgments upon them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 26. The speech which Joshua addressed to the Israelites when he thought he was going soon to leave them, was well calculated to recall to their minds the signal mercies of GOD from the time of Abraham to their entering into Canaan. Observe in particular, *ver. 14, 15*, and consider what choice Christians ought to make, whether to serve GOD, or to join with wicked people who forsake his worship and make to themselves idols, as those do who fix their hearts upon the pleasures and the vanities of the world. If every father and master of a family would make the same good resolution as Joshua did, and keep it, there would soon be a great change in the world for the better; we should then see households joining together night and morning in family prayer, keeping the sabbath holy, going to the house of GOD together, and partaking at all opportunities of the blessed sacrament of the LORD's supper. But the generality of people, who bear the name of Christians, appear to be ignorant

that there is such a thing as family religion, by which means parents, and masters of families, deprive themselves and their households of numberless comforts and advantages which they would enjoy if they followed the example of Joshua.

Ver. 26 to 29. The stone which Joshua set up was to serve as a witness against the Israelites, by putting them in mind, when they broke their covenant, of the solemn promise they had made to serve the LORD, and obey his commandments. Observe, that Joshua asked them several times whether they would serve God sincerely and truly, and he called upon them seriously to consider what they were doing when they made a solemn vow. This admonition should lead Christians seriously to reflect upon the solemn engagement they made to obey the same LORD, and serve him faithfully to their lives end, and to think of the consequences of disobedience.

Ver. 29 to 32. Observe, that Joshua died in a good old age; that he performed the part of a faithful leader and governor to the people of Israel to the last; and that he had the joy and satisfaction to see them in possession of the land of Canaan, and fully resolved to keep to the worship of the true God. Observe, also, *ver. 32 to the end*, that care was taken to fulfil the dying request which Joseph made so many years before, *see Genesis, chap. l. ver. 25.* Eleazar, the high priest, died about the same time with Joshua. The death of these good men was a great loss to the Israelites, but it was not so much felt while the Elders lived who had assisted Joshua at the division of the land. Yet when faithful ministers die their people sustain a great loss, and their memory should be honoured.

Keep in mind how exactly the LORD fulfilled all the promises he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their posterity after them, respecting their conquering their enemies, and gaining possession of the land of Canaan; and let this confirm your faith in the promises which relate to the vanquishing of your spiritual enemies, and the future possession of an eternal inheritance in heaven. But remember that, if you do not do your part, you will forfeit the blessed inheritance which God has graciously provided for every one of his faithful servants, and have your lot among the wicked.

JUDGES.

THIS book contains the history of the people of Israel from the death of Joshua to the time of Eli, who was the last judge. It comprehends about three hundred years. The judges were persons occasionally raised up by GOD in an extraordinary manner to deliver the people from their enemies, and to govern them.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, that the people of Israel had some means of inquiring of the LORD upon particular occasions; they are said in other parts of the Scripture to have inquired by Urim and Thummim, *see Exodus, chap. xxviii. ver. 30*; but what those words mean is not explained, nor does it concern us to know. The tribe of Judah had the preference in all things, because from it the MESSIAH was to proceed. By Judah and Simeon, *ver. 3*, are meant the tribes of Judah and Simeon. Adonibezek acknowledged the justice of his punishment, which shows that cruel men sometimes suffer the same evils they bring upon others. Jerusalem, which was afterwards to be the great city, was taken by the tribe of Judah.

Ver. 9 to 21. The request of Achsah, Caleb's daughter, is related also in the 15th chapter of *Joshua*. Observe, *ver. 20*, that Caleb in his *old age* drove out the three giants, of whom the false spies were so afraid, *Numbers, chapter xiii.*

Ver. 21 to the end. Also that GOD continued to subdue the Canaanites, but they were not utterly destroyed; those that remained were obliged to pay tribute. All this was foretold by Joshua, *see chap. xvii.* which shows that every thing was ordered by the LORD, who saw fit that some of the Canaanites

should remain in the land to prove Israel, whether they would keep true to his worship, and also as instruments in his hands to punish the Israelites whenever they should depart from his commandments. This should put Christians upon recollecting the great mercies they have received from God, and the solemn vow they have made to serve him, and to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, of which wicked people now make idols, instead of loving God with all their heart, with all their mind, and with all their strength.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, that the angel of the LORD reminded the people of his own faithfulness, and of their unfaithfulness in respect to *the covenant*, and told them why he did not destroy all the Canaanites. Compare this with *Joshua, chap. xxiii.* and with *Deuteronomy, chap. vii.*

Ver. 6 to 14. Observe, that these verses carry the history back to the death of Joshua, and show us that the people of Israel who served the LORD *themselves* in the days of Joshua, had not been attentive to the instruction of their children, nor careful to destroy idolatry as they were commanded to do; in consequence of which the new generations mixing with the idolatrous nations, in the space of twenty years forgot the LORD, and the wonders he had wrought, and learned of the heathen to worship idols. *Baalim* signify idols, or false gods; and *Baal* and *Ashtaroth* were idols worshipped by some of the heathen.

Ver. 14 to 16. Observe, that as the LORD fulfilled his divine promises in respect to *blessings* while his people were *obedient*, so did he fulfil his *threatenings* when they were *disobedient*. See the promises and threatenings in the *26th chapter of Leviticus*, and the *28th chapter of Deuteronomy*.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe, that the LORD did not forsake his people though they rebelled against him, for he raised them up judges to deliver them from time to time, as we read in the following chapters. Take particular notice that it was owing to the Israelites' sin that their enemies were not all driven out before them. After this manner God deals with

with mankind under the Christian covenant in respect to spiritual things; he has promised them blessings, and threatened punishments; when they are obedient he makes them sensible of his favour by the blessings of the *gospel*; when they disobey, he sends chastisements to correct their errors; and when they show penitence, he has compassion upon them. We should therefore take warning by the Israelites, and not provoke the LORD to anger.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 8. In these verses we have the names of the nations that remained among the people of Israel and tempted them to idolatry. Observe, that the people of Israel did the very things which the LORD had expressly commanded them not to do, and became downright idolaters. *Baalim and the groves*, signify idols that were worshipped with a number of superstitious rites in groves set apart on purpose.

Ver. 8 to 12. Observe, that GOD delivered the people of Israel for their sins into the hands of one of the neighbouring kings for eight years, but immediately upon their crying unto Him he raised them up a deliverer. The SPIRIT of the LORD coming upon Othniel, signified that he was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT to do what was proper for the deliverance of the people of Israel, and that, under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, he led them forth against the armies of the king of Mesopotamia and vanquished them. Observe how long the Israelites had rest from their enemies.

Ver. 12 to 31. Observe, that the Israelites returned again to their evil practices. Take notice to whom they were put in subjection, and who joined with the King of Moab, *ver. 13*, also, *ver. 15*, who was their deliverer and judge. Observe, that it is said that the LORD raised up Ehud, and that he told the King of Moab he had a message to him from God. This shows that Ehud acted as he was directed by God, who saw fit that the King of Moab, who was an abominable idolater, should be put to death in that manner for wise and good reasons no doubt. The people of Moab were idolaters as well as their king, therefore they were cut off in great numbers. Observe how long Israel had rest after this, *ver. 30*.

Ver.

Ver. 31. to the end. The Philistines had taken part against Israel. Shamgar must have acted by the SPIRIT of the LORD, or he could not have slain such numbers with the instrument here mentioned.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe that these Canaanites were the people whom Joshua told the Israelites they had no cause to fear, and whose country was given to the children of Joseph; see *Joshua, chap. xvii. ver. 16*; also, *Judges, chap. i. ver. 19*, and you will find that the tribe of Judah could not drive these Canaanites out. Observe how very formidable the Canaanites were at the time Deborah the prophetess judged Israel, *ver. 3*. Her speech to Barak, *ver. 6, 7*, shows that she was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT to send for Barak for the purpose of going against Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army. Observe that Barak, who at first was afraid of the armies of the Canaanites, was endued with courage to attack them, and proved victorious.

Ver. 18 to the end. The act of Jael can only be justified under such circumstances as the Israelites were in at that time. Sisera was devoted to destruction, and the deliverance of Israel depended greatly upon his death; and by this circumstance the prophecy of Deborah was fulfilled. The choice which the LORD had made of Deborah as judge of Israel, and his suffering Sisera to fall by the hand of a woman, showed that he could bring about his designs by the weakest instruments, and taught the Israelites that they were indebted to God alone for their deliverance.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that Deborah and Barak in their song of thanksgiving ascribed the memorable victory which they had gained entirely to the power of the LORD, which shows that they were pious good persons. By their example Christians are instructed to ascribe glory to GOD for national blessings.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 11. What is related in this chapter did not happen till forty years after Deborah's and Barak's victory. Recollect what a great victory the Israelites obtained two hundred years before over the Midianites in the time of Moses, as related in *Numbers, chap. xxxi*; and consider how very mortifying it must have been to them to have had this very nation so raised up above them that they were obliged to hide themselves in the mountains, caves, and dens, for fear of them; to be subject to have all the fruits of their labour taken from them by violence, and to be spoiled of their flocks and herds: but they brought all these evils upon themselves by their own wickedness. Observe, also, that when reduced to very great distress the people of Israel always *cried unto the LORD*, and notwithstanding their many provocations, he had compassion upon them whenever they did so. Who the prophet was that the LORD sent to them is not known, but he reminded the Israelites of God's former mercies, and encouraged them to hope for future ones.

Ver. 11 to 25. Observe, *ver. 14, 16, 17, 23*, that it could be no other than the LORD himself, who appeared as an *angel* unto Gideon; but Gideon, having never before beheld the LORD, could scarcely believe his own senses, or that he was really appointed to deliver Israel. The fire that consumed Gideon's sacrifice was a sign to him that it was the LORD.

Ver. 25 to 33. Gideon showed his faith in the LORD by destroying the altar of Baal, as did likewise his father Joash in justifying his son when the men of the city rose up against him.

Ver. 33 to the end. Consider what a mighty army the Midianites and their allies must have formed. Observe, that when the SPIRIT OF THE LORD came upon Gideon, he was immediately endued with courage, and began to act as the judge of Israel. It was because Gideon could scarcely yet persuade himself that God designed him so great an honour as to be the deliverer of Israel, that he requested farther signs, which were granted, that the miracle might prove not only

to him, but to all who should hear or read of the victory which was afterwards gained, that it was the LORD's doing.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe for what reason the LORD chose to send only a small number against such powerful armies, and what dread the Israelites in general had of the Midianites; also, the extraordinary way which the LORD saw fit to appoint to try the Israelites who were willing to go—how few were chosen for this great enterprize, and what the LORD promised to do.

Ver. 9 to 16. The dream which Gideon heard the man relate to his comrade, and the interpretation of it, were certainly from GOD, like those which Pharaoh and his butler and baker dreamed, and which Joseph interpreted. On this occasion they served to confirm the faith of Gideon.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe what uncommon preparations the Israelites made for attacking such an army as is described in *ver. 12*, and the courage with which Gideon and his little troop attacked it. Their success showed that GOD can bring about great events by the weakest means, and make the wicked the instruments of their own destruction. These extraordinary marks of divine power plainly proved that GOD fought for his people, and that when he had chastened them, and brought them back to their duty, he never failed to help and deliver them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 18. The men of the tribe of Ephraim were jealous of Gideon, thinking he wished to raise the tribe of Manasseh above them. We here see the good effects of mildness of temper. Gideon spake as a prophet respecting the punishments which would be inflicted upon the men of Succoth for refusing to give refreshment to the chosen troop, by whose means he had conquered the Midianites. Remember that Gideon on this occasion acted as he was inspired to do by the SPIRIT OF THE LORD.

Ver.

Ver. 18 to the end. Zebah and Zalmunnah certainly deserved their fate. Gideon showed both piety and humility by refusing to rule over Israel. By making an *ephod* it seems that he wished to officiate as a priest in some place of his own choosing, and to dedicate some part of the prey that had been taken to the LORD by this means; but in this matter he acted contrary to the express law of God; for the *ephod* was a part of the sacred garments of the high priest which he wore in the sanctuary, and should not have been made for any other purpose; but probably as the Israelites had lived for some time in the practice of idolatry, and Gideon's own father was one of the priests of Baal, Gideon was ignorant of the divine law. The meaning of *ver. 27* is, that the Israelites, instead of worshipping the LORD at the place where the ark was established, paid some kind of idolatrous worship at Ophra, where Gideon's *ephod* was kept. The conquest of Midian is one of the most memorable events in sacred history.

How shocking it is to read of the frequent rebellions of the people of Israel against the LORD; every new generation appears to have committed the same abominable crime of forsaking his worship, and joining themselves with idolaters; they were very ungrateful to Gideon to whom they were under such obligations; but those who forsake God are usually ungrateful to their earthly benefactors.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 7. Abimelech and those that joined with him were idolaters. He could not fully execute his wicked purpose; the LORD preserved Jotham. It was only a small part of Israel that made Abimelech king.

Ver. 7 to 22. The meaning of Jotham's parable was, that Gideon's other sons had refused to reign, and that Abimelech, who was a very bad man, was made prince, and would bring destruction on those who made him so.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, that Abimelech had success at first, because it was the will of God that the Shechemites should be punished for contributing to the death of Gideon's sons, and for electing a prince for themselves; and that the
very

very man they had chosen should be the minister of divine vengeance; but after this, Abimelech himself was cut off for his wickedness. If the tribes of Israel had not lost all regard for the honour of God, as well as all sense of gratitude, they would not have suffered such proceedings.

CHAPTER X.

Tola and Jair appear to have been good and upright judges, for they lived and died at peace. Observe, *ver. 4*, that in those days rulers, and other great men, rode upon asses. Also, *ver. 6*, what a number of different idols the Israelites worshipped, even all the false gods of the neighbouring nations; likewise what nations were permitted to oppress them; and *ver. 10*, that at this time the LORD refused to deliver them when they cried unto him. See *Deuteronomy, chap. xxxii. ver. 36 to 42*, and compare that passage with this event. Observe here, *ver. 15*, that when the LORD had tried the sincerity of the repentance of his people, and humbled them so that they forsook their sins, he had compassion upon them. The expression, *ver. 16, his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, signifies no more than that the LORD was resolved to deliver them. The ALMIGHTY cannot be grieved, according to the common sense of the word, for he is perfectly happy in himself at all times.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 29. In the former chapter it is related that the Amorites were gathered together against Israel, and that the Israelites deliberated among themselves about choosing a ruler, and we here find that their choice fell upon Jephthah, who was at first unwilling to take the command, till they made a solemn covenant to be subject to him after he had fought their battles, when he proceeded with great prudence, and justly expostulated with the king of the Amorites before he went to battle. Observe, that though Jephthah was chosen by the people, the LORD sent his spirit upon him, which showed that he approved of their choice. Observe Jephthah's

rash vow, which he should not have made, because, according to the *law of God*, certain animals only were to be offered up as burnt offerings.

Ver. 30 to the end. Jephthah's great success showed that the LORD was with him; but the sad consequences of his vow shows that zeal should be guided by discretion. The pious submission of Jephthah's daughter is admirable; she would not suffer her father to break his vow lest he should expose himself, or the people, to the divine vengeance. It is thought that Jephthah was permitted to redeem the life of his daughter by offering a proper burnt sacrifice in her stead, and that she was devoted to the service of the LORD all her days; however this might be, we should learn from the history of Jephthah to weigh well the lawfulness of any action before we engage ourselves solemnly to perform it.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 8. Jephthah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh which occasioned the jealousy of the Ephraimites, who wanted to share the honour of the victory though they had not shared the danger. Jephthah was permitted to punish them for breaking the peace and attacking their brethren without cause.

Ver. 8 to the end. We learn from the LORD's raising up one judge after another, that he never forsook his people though he chastised them for their sins.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Philistines originally descended from Mizriam the son of Ham, the son of Noah; in the time of the judges, the country they inhabited in the land of Canaan was divided into five principalities, or little kingdoms, called Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Akron. The Philistines were a very powerful warlike people, but they were idolaters. Observe, that though the LORD suffered the Philistines to be, as he had threatened, *thorns in the sides of the Israelites*, he would not let them prevail so as to destroy the posterity of his

his faithful servants, but prepared a deliverer for them against the time he should see fit to chastise their enemies. Observe, also, for what particular purpose Samson was to be born, and the kind of life he was to lead. A *Nazarite* was one who made a vow of observing a more than ordinary purity of life. The appearance of the angel was a very wonderful circumstance; but unless a messenger from heaven had been sent, Manoah and his wife would have been totally ignorant of what GOD had seen fit to ordain respecting their son, nor would they have thought of devoting him to the LORD. The miracle of fire from heaven upon Manoah's sacrifice, was designed to confirm their belief of what the angel had said. Samson, being designed for great things, was inspired by the SPIRIT of the LORD to perform them, and no doubt his mother told him of the LORD's command respecting him, *ver. 7*, and that he was to consider him as devoted to the LORD, who would favour him if he lived according to the law of the Nazarites. See this law, *Numbers, chap. vi.*

CHAPTER XIV.

Samson, as a Nazarite, devoted to the service of the LORD, and raised up for the express purpose of beginning to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines, did very wrong in marrying one of their women. By his being enabled to kill the lion, Samson was convinced he had uncommon strength; but his behaviour afterwards was very unsuitable to his religious profession, which GOD could not approve; but it was for Israel's sake, not for his own, that Samson had such uncommon prowess, though his gift, if exercised with zeal for the service of GOD, and love for the people, would have gained him great honour. Observe, *ver. 19*, that Samson was enraged because his wife, and her relations, had imposed upon him, and he set off in anger to revenge his *own quarrel*, not as the chosen servant of the LORD, to deliver Israel from their enemies; but the LORD sent his SPIRIT upon him, and while he thought only of himself, Samson did the LORD's work upon the Philistines. This part of Samson's history shows how GOD orders all events to bring about the purposes of his providence.

CHAPTER XV.

Observe, that Samson still went on not as the *chosen servant of the LORD*, but as a violent man, resolving to avenge his own quarrels; and the LORD permitted him to do so, that by his means the pride and tyranny of the Philistines might be checked, and Israel *in part delivered*. The wonderful strength which Samson displayed when he suffered himself to be bound by the Philistines, showed that the LORD wrought miracles by him, which were intended to strike the Philistines with awe, and lead them to consider Samson as an extraordinary person raised up by the LORD GOD of Israel to be the deliverer of his people. Samson boasted of his mighty deeds, but was made sensible that his strength was the immediate gift of GOD. He appears, by his history, to have judged only a part of Israel; Eli was high priest and judged Israel at the same period of time.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 23. Gaza was one of the five cities belonging to the Philistines. Observe that Samson appears to have gone thither without any regard to his appointed duty, and he certainly exposed himself to great danger, but was preserved from it, and disappointed his enemies by a wonderful exploit which he must have been led to perform by the SPIRIT OF THE LORD *coming upon him, ver. 3.* Observe, also, that the lords of the Philistines appear to have known Samson's character when they bribed Delilah to get his secret from him; and that as soon as his hair, which was the *appointed token* to distinguish him as the deliverer of Israel, was shaven, the LORD took away his strength and he became as another man. Samson's punishment was very great, but certainly not greater than he deserved. Compare his conduct with that of Joshua, and think how differently the latter would have used such a gift as Samson possessed.

Ver. 23 to the end. Observe, that the LORD would not suffer his divine purposes to be defeated either by the indif-

creation of Samson, or the pride and cruelty of the Philistines. Samson had not done *the whole* of his appointed work when the Philistines cut off his hair and put out his eyes. The LORD caused Samson's hair to grow again, as a token to him that his strength should be restored. Dagon their god, as they called him, was an image, the upper part of which was in the form of a man or a woman, the lower part in that of a fish. The Philistines sending for Samson to make them sport when they offered a sacrifice to their idol for delivering him into their hands, was an open affront to the LORD GOD. Observe, that Samson thought only of revenge for the injury he had received, not of the honour of GOD, therefore he was suffered to perish with the Philistines. The history of Samson, and other instances in holy writ, show that GOD sometimes makes use of persons who have not true piety in the execution of his designs. The evils which Delilah brought upon Samson should teach young men to beware how they set their affections upon, or keep company with, women of that description.

CHAPTER XVII.

Observe, that Micah and his mother were guilty of a very great crime, for they mixed the worship of the *true* GOD with the worship of *idols*, and Micah consecrated one of his own sons to be priest though he was of the tribe of Ephraim, and the priests were to be of the tribe of Levi; but he appears to have sinned through ignorance. The Levite, who took upon himself to perform the office of priest in Micah's house, was guilty of a very great crime, he suffered himself to be tempted by the hope of worldly rewards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter shows that what Micah had done in his own house was soon openly practised in one of the cities of the tribe of Dan, and that there was great confusion and violence in the land of Israel for want of attention to the law.

CHAPTERS XIX. XX. XXI.

These chapters give an account of some shocking and dreadful things that happened in Israel in the days of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron, when the Israelites had in a great measure forsaken the LORD, particularly the tribe of Benjamin, and committed all kinds of abominable deeds, which at last occasioned a civil war, and almost all the tribe of Benjamin were cut off. Observe, that the tribes were now made instruments of punishment to one another.

RUTH.

It is not certain at what time this history was written.

CHAPTER I.

Elimelech, as an Israelite, should not have left his inheritance to go to live among idolaters. Naomi was a very pious woman, and an excellent mother-in-law. Observe, that Ruth, though a Moabitess, and once an idolatress, had embraced the true religion. Her affection for her husband's mother, and her earnest desire to be joined with the people of God, showed that she was a very good woman. When Naomi and Ruth returned into the land of Israel, they were in very low circumstances, and having no child of her own, Naomi could not claim her husband's inheritance.

CHAPTER II.

Ruth went to glean without knowing what part of the field belonged to Boaz. Observe, that the providence of God directed Ruth to the spot where Boaz was likely to notice her.

His kindness to her, before he knew that her late husband was related to him, proved that he was a very benevolent man, and he set a good example to people who have ability to help the poor. Observe, also, the words which passed between Boaz and his reapers, *ver.* 4, and the conversation between him and Ruth in the following verses. How very different was it from the discourse which usually passes in harvest fields! Indeed it is very shocking to see the bounty of that great and good God, who alone can multiply the seed that is sown, gathered in without thankfulness; yet what would become of all mankind if the LORD should withhold his blessing?

CHAPTER III.

What Naomi advised, and Ruth practised, as related in this chapter, was according to the custom of the times. The meaning of it was, to claim the protection of Boaz, who was the relation of Elimelech.

CHAPTER IV.

Observe, that in the proposal which Boaz made to the other relations of Elimelech, he proceeded according to the Jewish law. See *Deuteronomy, chap. xxv. ver. 5.* Ruth was a Moabitess, yet she was received among the people of Israel, as Rahab had been before her; which showed that the Gentiles and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, would one day be taken into covenant with God, as they were after the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ruth is mentioned by St. Matthew, in the genealogy of Christ. *Matthew, chap. i. ver. 5.*

FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

THIS book shows the state and condition of the people of Israel under the government of Eli, who was the fourteenth judge under Samuel, who was the fifteenth and last, and under the reign of Saul, who was the first king of Israel.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 9. All pious persons at this time went up to the place where the Ark of the LORD was, in obedience to the law; see *Exodus, chap. xxiii. ver. 14*; *Deuteronomy, chap. xvi. ver. 16*. Observe, that the account we have here of the disagreements between Elkanah's two wives, shows that it is best to keep the marriage law which God made at the creation, namely, that a man should keep to one wife.

Ver. 9 to the end. The people used to hold a feast to the LORD when they went to the great sacrifices. The Israelitish women always considered it as a mark of God's displeasure when they had no children, because God had promised the multiplying of families among the blessings he would bestow upon his faithful people. Hannah, being a pious woman, prayed for a son that she might dedicate him to the service of the LORD; and the care she took to perform her vow as soon as the child was old enough to be received by the high priest, shows that she was in earnest when she prayed. Samuel was about six years old when his mother took him to Eli; but young as he was he worshipped the LORD, which proves that his mother had begun betimes to teach him religion. Observe, that Hannah has left an excellent example to Christian mothers, all of whom dedicate their children, whether sons or daughters, to the service of the Lord in baptism, though

not to the priesthood, but few in comparison are careful to train them betimes in the paths of piety like this good woman.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that Hannah's thanksgiving affords another proof of her piety. It is in figurative language, such as was used by the prophets, and she was inspired by the HOLY GHOST when she spoke it. The meaning of this song is, that the providence of GOD rules all things; that GOD confounds the proud and takes care of the humble; that he protects the weak and afflicted, and grants their prayers. Compare it with the hymn of the Virgin Mary, in the *1st chapter of St. Luke's Gospel*.

Ver. 12 to 22. By *sons of Belial*, were meant very wicked men. Eli's sons well deserved this character, for being in the priest's offices they brought dishonour on religion, and helped to corrupt the people. Samuel's wearing the ephod, which was one of the priest's garments, showed that though a child he ministered in the tabernacle.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, that Eli, instead of punishing his sons, only gently reprov'd them, which was a great sin in him as a parent, but still more so as high priest, and GOD threatened to cut off all his posterity for it. Eli was of the family of Aaron, and if his sons had not forfeited the honour of the high priesthood, it would have been continued to one of them after their father's death, but neither of those who conducted themselves so ill in the priest's offices were fit to be at the head of the church. Take notice of *ver. 30*, and consider what a blessing it is *to be honoured of GOD*, and how dreadful to be *lightly esteemed* by that best of Beings who is the giver of all good things!

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 19 Observe, that Samuel, though a child, performed his duty in the office assigned him by the high priest, and that the LORD made him a prophet by revealing to him what he would do in respect to Eli; and there is no doubt
but

but that God will bestow blessings according to their condition in life, upon all who honour him in their youth. If Eli had used his authority with his sons to restrain them from wickedness, whatsoever punishment the LORD had seen fit to send upon them, he would most probably have suffered Eli to go down to the grave without the sorrow of knowing that his posterity would be cut off. Consider that as it is the duty of parents to correct their children for their faults, it must of course be the duty of children to submit to the correction of their parents, and to amend their faults. Observe, that Samuel showed great respect as well as affection for Eli, by wishing to conceal from him what he knew must greatly afflict him. In this manner young persons should always conduct themselves towards their superiors. Eli's answer to Samuel, *ver. 18*, shows that, though in regard to his sons he was greatly in fault, he was himself a pious man; and knew that it was his duty to resign himself to the divine will. In this instance he set a good example to all persons who suffer under the chastisements of the Almighty. Indeed no misfortune can happen to any person without the permission of God, therefore under all afflictions we should say with Eli, *It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth him good*, for we are sure that God will do that which is right.

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe, that Samuel grew to man's estate, and was acknowledged as a prophet before the LORD sent the threatened punishment upon Eli's sons. Observe, also, that the ARK OF THE COVENANT still continued at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was set up in the days of Joshua. See *Joshua, chap. xviii.*

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 12. By the word of Samuel coming to all Israel, *ver. 1*, we may understand that it was known throughout the tribes of Israel that Samuel was a prophet, but it does not appear that they consulted him, or entreated him to inquire of the LORD whether they should go out against the Philistines to battle or not; therefore the LORD suffered them to be defeated. Observe, that the carrying the Ark of the Covenant into the camp, without the command of the LORD,

was a very presumptuous act, for it implied that they thought they could oblige the LORD to give them success for the honour of his own name. The behaviour of the Israelites when they saw the Ark in the camp was exactly like that of the heathen when the images of their false gods were carried into the field of battle. At the sight of the Ark the Philistines were terrified, but GOD removed his *terror* from *them*, and sent it upon the Israelites themselves, so that they fell before their enemies. The Ark was the immediate token of GOD'S PRESENCE, and in it was deposited the *tables of testimony*. By suffering the Ark to be taken, GOD showed his displeasure to the people of Israel for their hypocrisy in pretending to trust in him while they rebelled against him.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe, that GOD's threatenings, *chap. ii.* were exactly fulfilled in respect to Eli and his sons. This shows that GOD will sooner or later send judgments upon wicked families as well as wicked nations. The GLORY might truly be said to *be departed from Israel*, when the ARK OF THE COVENANT *was taken*; for their glory as a nation consisted in their being *the people of GOD*, and having the ARK, as *a token of his presence among them*, in a manner which no other nations had.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that though GOD, to show his anger against the Israelites, had suffered the Philistines to carry away the ARK from the field of battle, he would not permit an idol to stand before it, nor suffer the heathen to go unpunished for placing it in an idol's temple. From the same fatal disease being inflicted upon the people of every place to which the ARK was sent, it was evident that it was a judgment from GOD, and the Philistines considered it in this light; yet they did not forsake their idols, but only endeavoured to send the LORD GOD away from them. All this happened to show the Philistines that they could not affront the God of Israel without bringing punishments upon themselves; and to prove that the gods they worshipped were only dead idols.

CHAPTER VI.

Observe, that the LORD did not suffer the Philistines to keep the ARK, but forced them to send it back with a *trespass offering*, by which they acknowledged that they had committed a great trespass in presuming to take it. It seems that there was a *plague of mice* as well as a *fore disease* among the Philistines, so that though they had obtained a victory over the army of Israel, and seized upon the Ark, they had felt the power of God more sensibly than if they had not taken it, and the Israelites had not been subdued. Observe, that the LORD vouchsafed to give the Philistines the sign they required, to show that it actually was his hand that smote them. Consider how surprising it was to see creatures who are so fond of their young as cows are, going quietly away from them, *ver. 12*. The men of Bethshemesh broke an express commandment of the Lord, *see Numbers, chap. iv. ver. 20*; for none but the high priest was suffered to look into the ARK, and they seem to have wanted to get rid of it like the Philistines, as if the Lord's power could be lessened by this means. What befel them was intended by the LORD to produce reverence in the Israelites, and to make them afraid of dishonouring his holy name. It also served to show them that the anger of the LORD was not appeased, though the ARK was brought back to them.

Kerjath-jearim was in the road to Shiloh, probably the people of Bethshemesh thought Samuel and the Elders at Shiloh would fetch the Ark from thence; but it does not appear that it was ever restored to its former place.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, that the men of Kerjath-jearim appear to have understood why those of Bethshemesh were cut off. The ARK was suffered to remain at the house of Aminadab, because the LORD did not give a command for its removal. Samuel's admonitions to the people, *ver. 3*, shows that they practised the abominations of the heathens; there-
fore

fore, as the prophet of the LORD, he would not pray for them till they forsook idolatry. The Philistines hoped to take advantage of the Israelites while they were engaged in religious acts; but the Israelites had no cause to fear while they were doing their duty.

Ver. 9 to 15. There being no high priest, Samuel, as prophet of the LORD, offered the sacrifice of atonement, viz. *the lamb without blemish*, and the LORD wrought a miracle to convince the Philistines and the Israelites, he was the only GOD, and that none could resist his power. From the LORD's defending Israel from their enemies, we may be certain they had forsaken idols and worshipped him alone.

Ver. 15 to the end. Samuel appears to have taken great pains to keep the people to a proper sense of their duty, and to have kept up religion in the best manner possible, while the service of the tabernacle was discontinued, which could not go on while the ARK was absent from it, neither could Samuel fetch the ARK back without the express command of GOD. Observe, *ver. 13*, that the Philistines never after invaded the Israelites during the life of Samuel. This shows what a blessing it is to a people to have wise rulers, such as fear GOD, since for their sakes GOD often spares and blesses a nation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. The people of Israel had been in a state of prosperity for a number of years, under the wise and prudent government of Samuel; and they now began to fall back into wicked practices. Observe, that it was not from a real love of the state that they desired a king, but that they might make a greater figure among the heathen nations, and that the heads of tribes might have high offices under his government. Their desiring a king, *like the other nations*, was in fact *rejecting the LORD*, who had hitherto been their KING, and Israel, his *peculiar people*, chosen from the other nations to keep up the true religion in the world, which was the highest honour any people could have, as Moses repeatedly observed to them in his exhortation in the *Book of Deuteronomy*.

Ver. 10 to 19. The kings of the heathen nations governed their

their people in the absolute manner described in these verses. The LORD ruled his *people* by just and upright laws, calculated for the comfort of all ranks from the highest to the lowest.

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe, that the people preferred such a king as Samuel described to them; and the LORD resolved to punish them by granting their request.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe, that as the Israelites had not desired a good religious king, but such a king as other nations had, the LORD gave them one according to their wicked hearts' desire, a man of a proud ambitious temper, but of a majestic appearance; and it was so ordered by Providence that Saul should go to Samuel at this critical time without any thoughts of being made king of Israel.

Ver. 11 to 15. Observe, that whilst the ARK was separated from the TABERNACLE, sacrifices were offered by Samuel on *high places*, set apart for the purpose; one of those was at Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and the LORD had prepared him to expect Saul.

Ver. 15 to 21. Observe, that the LORD was still merciful to his people Israel though they rebelled against him; he would not deliver them entirely into the power of the king they were to have, but would still rule over them himself; the new king was to be his *captain*, or *deputy*, to act by his command.

Ver. 21 to the end. Observe, that Saul at this time expressed himself with great humility, he had never yet been put to the proof, he had never looked up to a throne; but when he was made a king he soon showed his haughty ambitious temper. According to the Levitical law the people were to eat a part of the burnt sacrifices; and as the occasion of the sacrifice which Samuel offered at that time was to elect a king, the prophet had reserved the proper part of the sacrifice for the king.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 17. Saul was anointed with oil by the prophet in order to consecrate, or set him apart, for the important office of king of Israel, the captain of the LORD's inheritance. Observe, that Samuel gave Saul *three signs, or tokens*, by which he might know that all that happened to him was by the particular appointment of God. The company of prophets, who met Saul, are supposed to have been some of those young men who belonged to a school, or college, which Samuel had founded, in which they studied the scriptures, and were inspired of God to understand and expound them. It appears, from *ver. 5*, that part of the employment of these prophets was the singing psalms and devout hymns to musical instruments; on this occasion they probably were inspired to receive Saul as the LORD's *anointed, the king of Israel*. Observe, also, that by speaking the words of divine inspiration Saul showed that the LORD had actually chosen him. The people might well be surprised at so strange a circumstance. The high place Saul went to was at Gilgal, *see ver. 8*.

Ver. 17 to 25. It was to satisfy the people that the LORD had really chosen Saul to be king that Samuel cast lots. Saul hid himself, perhaps, from the fear that the people would not accept so mean a man for their king; but it proved otherwise, his outward appearance pleased them, and they looked no farther.

Ver. 25. By telling the people the manner of the kingdom, we may understand that Samuel pointed out to them what Moses had written concerning it so many years before, *see Deuteronomy, chap. xvii. ver. 14 to the end*. Observe, in the last verse of the *xviiith of Deuteronomy*, the promise which was made to the kings if they kept the commandments of God. This, Saul had every encouragement to do; and would he but have followed the dictates of the Holy Spirit all would have been well. Observe, that as the LORD had seen fit to comply with the desire of the people to have a king, it was the duty of all the people to receive and honour him; and remember, that wherever a monarchy is established, it is the duty of those who live under it to submit to the king.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 12. Jabesh-Gilead was a part of the land of Israel. Observe, that the LORD did not display miraculous power in the punishment of the king of the Ammonites, but inspired Saul, the new king of Israel, with indignation, and endued him with courage to collect a great army and go against the Ammonites; the people also were inspired to obey him.

Ver. 12. Observe, *ver. 13*, that Saul had at this time good notions. Samuel had directed Saul to go before him to Gilgal, and there the prophet found him. By *renewing the kingdom* was meant, confirming Saul with the solemnities proper for the occasion.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, that Samuel did not desire to govern Israel any longer when they had a king of GOD's choosing; neither did he wish for his sons to have any authority or power over them; but when he resigned his power he called upon the people to bear witness against him if he had in any respect departed from his integrity as judge of Israel. Their answer shows that he had acted uprightly.

Ver. 6 to 16. Observe, in these verses, how Samuel reminded the Israelites of the mercies they and their fathers had received from GOD, and of their ingratitude for his goodness to them; and that he told them GOD was still ready to bless both them and their king, provided they did not provoke him by their wickedness. This shows the patience and long-suffering of the ALMIGHTY, and teaches us that kingdoms, where religion and justice abound, are blessed of GOD, but that he never fails to punish wicked princes and people.

Ver. 16 to the end. The miraculous storm of thunder and rain served to convince the people that, though the LORD had let them have a king according to their heart's desire, he was offended with them for rejecting him, and would be feared by them. Observe, that when the people humbled themselves

themselves before God, the prophet comforted them with the kindest promises. Observe, also, the great tenderness and affection which the good prophet showed to the people who had treated him so disrespectfully. Take particular notice of his words, *ver. 23, 24*, and lay them up in your heart, for the prophet's rules are suited to Christians above all people, for greater things have been done for them than for the Israelites, and they are bound in a more especial manner *to fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all their hearts.*

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. In disbanding the great army, of which we read in *chap. xi.* Saul followed his own will without inquiring the will of the LORD. Observe, that Jonathan acted imprudently in attacking the Philistines with such a small force as the LORD had not promised him victory. No wonder the Israelites were distressed at the sight of such an army, as they had no assurance of divine assistance, and Samuel was not at hand to inquire the will of the LORD. By offering the burnt offering himself, Saul showed contempt of the *divine ordinances*, for none but priests and prophets were to offer these sacrifices under the law. Samuel saw the matter in this light. Saul deserved to lose the kingdom because he did not act as the LORD's deputy, but according to his own will. By *a man after God's own heart, ver. 14*, was meant one who would be faithful as captain of the LORD's inheritance, making the will of God the rule of all his actions in the kingly office.

Ver. 15 to the end. How there came to be no smiths in Israel is not related. Saul had, however, procured both swords and spears for himself and Jonathan his son. The things mentioned in *ver. 21*, were utensils for husbandry.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 24. Jonathan appears to have been inspired of the LORD to go upon the enterprize here mentioned, and to have

have had a sign given him to convince him that he was so, as Gideon had before he went against the Midianites, *see Judges, chap. vi*; for so pious a man as Jonathan would not have presumed on the help of the LORD without consulting the priest or the prophet Samuel. Observe, that the defeat of the Philistines, and the earthquake, proved that it was the LORD himself who saved Israel, and not Saul, for he must have been cut to pieces with his small army if the LORD had not sent his terror upon the Philistines and encouraged the Israelites. Observe, also, that Saul again transgressed by desiring the priest to remove the ARK without the permission of God.

Ver. 24 to 33. The oath which Saul made his army take was a very rash one, for it might have proved fatal to the very person who had, under GOD, first put the enemy to flight. It was contrary to the *law* for the people to eat their meat with the blood in it; *see Deuteronomy, chap. xii.* This offence Saul led them into by obliging them to fast while they endured the fatigues of battle.

Ver. 33 to the end. Observe, that Saul pretended to have great zeal, but he did not act according to the *law of God* in building the altar, therefore the LORD would not give him an answer by the priest. If Saul had not been a most unnatural father, the lot falling upon Jonathan would have distressed him greatly. Observe, that as Jonathan was innocent, the LORD would not suffer him to die for his father's sin. Observe, also, *ver. 47*, that the LORD continued to give victory to Saul's armies for the sake of his people Israel, though the king himself had forfeited the divine favour.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1. The Amalekites were at this time a great and powerful nation, and entirely given up to idolatry; they had always borne great enmity to the people of Israel, and set themselves against the LORD. *See Exodus, chap. xvii. Numbers, xxiv.* As captain of the LORD's inheritance, Saul should have followed the divine command exactly, and not have spared those whom the LORD had devoted to destruction.

Ver.

Ver. 10 to 24. By the Lord's *repenting*, is to be understood that the LORD rejected Saul from being king over Israel. No excuse can justify any one for breaking the commandments of God, or keeping them in part, as Saul had done; God requires full obedience. Saul's address to Samuel was that of a *hypocrite*, and it was very mean in him to lay the blame upon the people for what they had done by his command. Take particular notice of Samuel's words, *ver. 22, 23*, which show that the outward forms of religion are of no value in the sight of God while the heart is rebellious and disobedient to his laws.

Ver. 24 to 30. Saul was not a sincere penitent; his sorrow was worldly sorrow. Samuel's mantle rending when Saul laid hold of it was a sign that God had rent the kingdom from Saul. Samuel's words, *ver. 29*, signify that God never repents after the manner of men, he never changes his purposes. Observe, that Samuel complied with Saul's request by the permission of the LORD, who did not design to take the crown from him, because he had been consecrated, or set apart, in a solemn manner, for the kingly office; but the LORD would not any longer employ him as *captain of his inheritance*, which had been his highest honour.

Ver. 30 to the end. Observe, that as Agag had been condemned to death by the LORD before Saul was sent with his army against the Amalekites, Saul's sparing him was an act of rebellion against God. If Samuel also had spared Agag, he would have been a partner in Saul's crime. Observe, also, that as the LORD had rejected Saul from being king it would not have become the prophet of the LORD to hold friendly intercourse with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 6. It appears from *ver. 1*, that though the LORD had before revealed to Samuel that he had given Saul's kingdom to another, Samuel knew not the person. Samuel was directed to proceed in the manner described in the following verse, because the LORD did not design to bring David to the throne till after Saul's death, though he chose him at this time as *captain of his inheritance*.

Ver.

Ver. 7 to 14. Observe the words of *ver. 7*, and remember that piety and uprightness of heart are the only qualifications that can recommend any one to the favour of God. God caused David to be anointed by Samuel, because he had these qualifications, and as soon as he was anointed the LORD sent his HOLY SPIRIT upon him to supply what might be wanting for the high office to which he had appointed him.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, that when the LORD rejected Saul he took his Holy Spirit from him, and gave him up to the power of the devil. This is all that can be meant by *an evil spirit from the Lord troubling him*. Music it seems was the only thing that could calm his mind. Observe, *ver. 18*, that Saul's servants spoke of David as of a *valiant man*, a *man of war*; how he gained this reputation is explained in the following chapter. It was ordered by Providence that David should be brought to Saul's court; but he had many trials to go through before he was seated on the throne. The example of Saul, who, after he had received the SPIRIT OF GOD, was given up to an *evil one*, represents the state of those who render themselves unworthy of the grace of GOD; they are deprived of it, and reduced to a most wretched condition.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, *ver. 11*, that Saul, as well as his people, had lost that courage with which the LORD had endued them on former occasions. The champion of the Philistines, as well as their numerous host, were idolaters; and the king and people of Israel would have had no reason to fear them while under the protection of GOD.

Ver. 12 to 20. David being but a youth, Saul had not employed him as his armour-bearer, though he had appointed him to that office. Observe how it was ordered by Providence that David should go to the camp of Israel at this critical juncture; little did he think that he should be called forth as the *captain of the LORD's inheritance* in his youth, to subdue a mighty giant, and lead the armies of Israel to victory.

Ver. 20 to 32. Observe, that whilst all Israel fled away and were terrified at the threats of the giant, David alone remained undaunted; and that he was immediately inspired with the

desire of accepting Goliath's challenge, and with hopes of vanquishing him, and nothing could dishearten him.

Ver. 32 to 41. Observe, with what courage, and at the same time with what modesty, David addressed Saul, and the reason he gave for thinking he should overcome Goliath, *ver. 36.* Take notice also of his piety and faith expressed in *ver. 37.* Observe, that Saul appears to have been convinced by David's speech that he was inspired of GOD to fight the giant, but he supposed it necessary to arm him for the combat; David however thought otherwise, for he knew it was not his own sword that would help him. Consider what a wonderful sight it must have been to behold a young shepherd, with no other weapons than a sling and five smooth stones, advancing to engage in single combat with a mighty giant completely armed as Goliath is described; but remember that one was the servant of the *living God, the captain of the LORD's inheritance*; the other was the champion of a *nation of idolaters.*

Ver. 41 to 55. Observe, *ver. 42,* with what disdain the giant beheld his young adversary, and in *whose name* he cursed him. Observe, also, David's answer to Goliath, *ver. 45, 46, 47,* and the strong confidence he had that he should, through the power of the LORD, destroy this proud idolater. This plainly shows that the SPIRIT of the LORD was upon David. If David had not been assisted by the LORD in a wonderful manner, he certainly could not have gained this victory; but it pleased the LORD to make these idolaters sensible that he could vindicate his own honour and subdue their pride by means which appeared weak in the eyes of men.

Ver. 55 to the end. Though Saul had before made David his armour-bearer, he might not recollect his person, for he had a number of armour-bearers besides; two thousand, it is supposed, who were only called upon in time of war. David was at that time about 22 years old, but being of a fair and ruddy complexion, he probably looked younger than he was, and though Saul might know him as a musician, he might be unacquainted with his parentage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that it pleased GOD to raise up a friend to David when he had the least reason to expect it. Jonathan plainly saw that David was in favour with GOD, and he resolved to supply to him in kindness what might be wanting in Saul. We see that not only Jonathan, but all the nation, had a high esteem for David, and they gave him that honour which would have been given to Saul had he continued obedient to the commandments of the LORD. Observe, that David being made the principal person when the women were rejoicing for the victory, raised the envy of Saul, who saw in him the man to whom the LORD had threatened by the prophet Samuel to give the kingdom. *See chap. xv. ver. 28.*

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, that Saul's whole proceedings showed he was a wicked, artful, cruel man; and that, amidst all his victories and honours, David met with many crosses which were intended by Providence as trials to prepare him for the kingdom. Observe, also, that notwithstanding all Saul did to destroy David, he was forced at last to give him his daughter Michal, and that the snares he laid for David all turned to his own confusion and David's glory, and served to endear David more to the people. Thus we see that nothing can hurt those whom GOD loves; that the LORD always watches over his faithful servants for their good, and that whatever the wicked undertake against them turns to their advantage in the end.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 18. We have here some remarkable instances of the power of God in calming the passions of men, and preventing them from putting their wicked designs in execution. Observe, that Jonathan did his duty to his father and to his friend at the same time, and set a good example of taking the part of the innocent. Saul showed a wicked corrupt heart,

by trying to kill David after taking an oath that he would not hurt him, but GOD delivered his faithful servant.

Ver. 18 to the end. David fled to Samuel that he might learn the will of the LORD in respect to his future conduct.

CHAPTER XX.

Observe what a faithful friend David had in Jonathan, and how cruelly he was treated by Saul. Also, *ver. 14, 15*, that Jonathan thought the LORD would give the kingdom to David; and *ver. 31*, that Saul suspected David would be king after him. Jonathan was too pious a man to oppose the will of the LORD, nor did he entertain the least jealousy of David; this showed true greatness of mind. But Saul grew worse and worse, which is usually the case with those who give themselves up to unruly passions. In this account of Jonathan and David, we see what are the duties of true friendship.

CHAPTER XXI.

Observe, that David did not do right in telling a falsehood to the priest, neither should he have feigned himself mad, for these actions prove that he had not at that time such firm trust and confidence in GOD as he ought to have had, after the mercies which had been shown him; but though he fell into sin through the weakness of human nature and sudden temptation, his heart was true and faithful; therefore the LORD permitted him to succeed in getting a supply of food, and a sword, both of which he stood in need of. This shows that GOD in mercy bears with the infirmities of those who fear and serve him truly.

CHAPTER XXII.

David's relations had reason to fear that Saul would persecute them also, therefore they joined themselves with David. Many persons had cause to be discontented under such a king as Saul; but David knew it would be a great sin to raise a rebellion

rebellion against the LORD's anointed, and to take the kingdom before Saul's death, therefore he would not be their leader for such a purpose. The King of Moab perhaps was induced to give protection to David's father and mother, because Ruth the Moabitess was the grandmother of Jesse.

Observe, *ver. 5*, that David was not forsaken of the LORD, a prophet was sent to direct him what to do. Observe, also, *ver. 8*, that Saul accused his son Jonathan and David falsely, for neither of them had formed a design against his life. Doeg acted a very wicked part in making a false report, and in executing Saul's command; and Saul was guilty of great injustice and cruelty in putting so many persons to death without hearing what they had to say in their defence. Saul's causing the priests to be slain and their city to be destroyed, showed that he had no regard for religion, but that, on the contrary, he wished entirely to root it out, for he would not have left one minister alive. Ahimelech had done nothing criminal, but God saw fit to permit him to be put to death because he was of Eli's race, but doubtless he found a recompence in a better world. Observe, that David was deeply concerned at having been the innocent cause of the death of the priests.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, that though David at this time led the life of a fugitive, yet the LORD permitted him to subdue the Philistines, which shows that he considered David, and not Saul, as the *captain of his inheritance*.

Ver. 9 to 19. The answer which David received when Abiathar, by his desire, inquired of the LORD for him, clearly proves that God knows what men will do even before they have formed their designs. Observe, that Jonathan submitted without a murmur to be set aside for David to have the kingdom because it was the will of the LORD.

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe, that wherever David went there were persons ready to persecute or betray him. This is often the condition of those whom God loves, but when they think their ruin certain, his providence delivers them in a way they little think of. This was frequently David's case; Saul, on the contrary, was disappointed in all his designs. In

the 54th Psalm we may see what were David's sentiments upon his being delivered from the dangers which threatened him at this time.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Observe, here, the mildness and moderation of David; he had it in his power to kill his unjust persecutor and did it not; he would not even suffer his people to hurt Saul. By this he set an excellent example of returning good for evil. Observe, also, that Saul, though he hated David, was melted into tears of gratitude and affection by this noble conduct, and was even forced to bless David, and own that he was more righteous than himself. This shows that a mild, prudent, and gentle behaviour may be of great use in softening the hearts of our enemies. It is probable that David continued some time in the strong holds of Engedi, and that during this time he wrote some of his Psalms, particularly the 104th.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1. Observe, at the beginning of this chapter, an account of the death of that great and good prophet Samuel. The memory of this holy man ought to be had in reverence to the end of the world. He was devoted to God at his birth, and had constantly made the service of God, and the welfare of Israel, his business and his delight, and he died full of years and lamented by all ranks of people.

Ver. 2 to the end. Observe, that Nabal's behaviour was both ungrateful and insolent, and it was also very foolish; but David was too hasty in calling his men together to punish him for it, and he was near doing an act which he would afterwards have bitterly repented. If Abigail had justified her husband's behaviour she would have made herself a partner in his guilt. It is plain, from her discourse, *ver. 28, 30*, that she expected David would be king of Israel. Observe, *ver. 32*, that David plainly saw the providence of God in so ordering events, that Abigail should arrive in time to keep him back from putting his hasty design in execution. Ob-
serve,

serve, *ver.* 38, that the LORD took the punishment of that wicked man, Nabal, upon himself. In marrying several wives, David followed the custom of the age he lived in ; but this was the occasion of much family uneasiness to him. From this lesson we may learn what mischief people bring upon themselves and their families by ill nature and covetousness, and how dangerous it is to give way to resentment when provoked by ill treatment ; and that we should always be ready to hear those who would persuade us to moderate our anger. We should also learn from David's example, *ver.* 32, to be thankful to God when we are by any means kept back from sin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Observe, in this chapter, the providence of God in giving David an opportunity of showing both his piety and his moderation. Take notice of his words, *ver.* 9, 10, 11, which show that he would on no account set himself up as king till Saul was dead, neither would he lift up his hand against him. Also, *ver.* 19, how David lamented his being driven away from the land of Israel and obliged to live among idolaters, and *ver.* 25, that Saul's conscience again reproached him for his injustice to David, and that he knew the LORD had appointed David to be king after him.

From David's behaviour to Saul, we should learn to reverence kings ; and also to try to work upon those people who would do us harm, by meekness and humility, by which the worst men are forced at last to declare in favour of the righteous ; but even supposing that we are not able by this means to pacify those that hate us, yet we shall certainly secure to ourselves the Divine favour ; for, as David says, the LORD will reward every one according to his righteousness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe, that by giving himself up to despair, David was led to take an imprudent step, which brought

great temptations upon him. The Philistines were the last people he should have made an alliance with ; but knowing, that though David had great faults, he was true to his holy worship and kept himself from idolatry, the LORD had compassion upon him, and disposed the heart of Achish to show him favour. It was of great consequence to David to have the city of Ziklag, for his followers daily were increased, their numbers were very great, and they could not find a place of safety in the land of Israel.

Ver. 8 to the end. The Geshurites and Gezrites were branches of the Amalekites, whom the LORD had devoted to destruction ; David, therefore, was justified in putting them to death ; but he acted very meanly in concealing the matter from Achish, and found himself in great straits, which is usually the case of those who practise deceit and falsehood in any way.

In the 12th chapter of the 1st Book of Chronicles, we have an account of the valiant men from Saul's army who resorted to David whilst he was in the wilderness of Ziph, and whilst he remained at Ziklag ; these formed a powerful army, and they were desirous of placing David upon the throne of Israel, but he would not go against Saul.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1, 2. David was in a very difficult situation, but God was pleased shortly after to deliver him from it.

Ver. 3. There were among the idolatrous nations persons called wizards and witches, who practised magical arts, by which they pretended to converse with spirits. How far devils were permitted to deceive those who had forsaken God, and given themselves up to all kinds of wickedness, it is not possible for us to know ; but, from *Leviticus, chap. xix. ver. 31 ; chap. xx. ver. 6 and 27 ; and Deut. chap. xviii. ver. 10, 11*, we learn that the people of Israel were commanded to have no dealings with such persons ; but it seems some had got in amongst them, and Saul, in the beginning of his reign, had banished them. Observe, *ver. 6*, that Saul had inquired of the LORD in the appointed way, but received no answer because his heart was not right towards

towards God; it was *fear*, not *religion*, which led him to take these steps. Observe, also, *ver. 7*, that, instead of humbling himself before God, Saul committed a most abominable sin. The witch of Endor was one of those who practised magical arts, and who had dealings with the devil. This is all we can know for a certainty. If Samuel really appeared it was the LORD's doing. However, it is of no use to puzzle ourselves about such passages as these, which cannot at this distance of time be fully explained; it is enough for us to know that what happened to Saul was for *his punishment*. He was deprived of all hope, and gave himself up to despair. In Saul's behaviour on this occasion we see the true character of sinners who fill up the measure of their iniquities; they grow worse and worse, and commit new and greater abominations at the very time the severest judgments are going to fall upon them. We also see in him the wretched condition of those who are forsaken of God; and since it is despising of God, and being hardened in sin, that can alone bring people into this state, we should take great care not to fall into a course of wickedness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Observe, that if the princes of the Philistines had not insisted upon the king's dismissing David and his followers, he must either have fought against the Israelites, or turned his arms upon that king who had treated him with so much kindness; and that this was the consequence of David's going into the land of the Philistines, without inquiring the will of the LORD; but the providence of God most happily delivered him, and preserved him from committing a great sin.

CHAPTER XXX.

It was a very severe trial to David to have his city burnt and his wives taken captives, but he had brought it upon himself. Observe, that at this time he showed his faith,
and

and it pleased the LORD to deliver him out of all his troubles and give him a considerable booty.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Observe, that Saul, by the act of self-murder, showed he had not a religious mind; he was more afraid of falling into the hands of his enemies than of offending God. This king had been chosen by God, and began his reign well, but at length he came to a miserable end, and God's threatenings against him on many occasions were put in execution. Thus we may be certain it always has been, and always will be, whatever God denounces against sinners will be executed sooner or later.

Jonathan was a man of great piety and virtue, and we do not read of any wickedness practised by his brothers. Their losing their lives in this battle shows that the innocent sometimes suffer with the guilty in temporal judgments; but we must remember there is another world in which the good will have their reward, and that death is an evil only to the wicked. In the *1st Book of Chronicles, chap. x. ver. 13 and 14*, we see for what transgression in particular Saul died.

SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL.

IN this book we have the history of the reign of David, which continued about forty years.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 17. David's mourning for Saul, who had been such a cruel enemy, shows that he had a virtuous, generous mind; and his behaviour on this occasion should serve as an example to all who see their enemies cut off by death.

Observe, that the Amalekite, who came to bring the news of Saul's death, told a falsehood, thinking to gain a great reward from David; for Saul was dead before his armour-bearer fell upon his sword. If Saul had really had life in him, the Amalekite ought to have endeavoured to preserve it; and as he owned himself to be an Amalekite, and that he had killed the king of Israel, David did right in condemning him to be put to death; for Saul, though a bad man, was a *sacred person*, because he had been anointed king at the LORD's command.

Ver. 17 to the end. David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan is, in the original language, a very beautiful poem.

Observe, that David having waited patiently till God thought fit to deliver him from the unjust persecution of Saul, without attempting to make use of any unlawful means to deliver himself, God directed all events so, that Saul died without David's contributing in the least towards his death; he might therefore innocently and lawfully take the kingdom, for he was the LORD's anointed, as well as Saul.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 18. Hebron was the principal city of the tribe of Judah; it had been given to Caleb as a reward for his faithfulness, and he had assigned it to the Levites. It was foretold by Jacob, *Genesis, chap. xlix. ver. 8, &c.* that Judah should be the head tribe, that in which the kingdom of Israel should be established, and from which the Messiah should proceed. David's kindness to the men of Jabesh Gilead showed that he bore no hatred to Saul. Abner was Saul's uncle, he did not like the kingdom should go out of Saul's family, but he had no right to set up Ishbosheth, as God had chosen David to reign after Saul; but God was pleased to exercise David with more trials before he suffered him to enjoy the *rest* he had promised him. What Abner, *ver. 14*, called *play*, was, in fact, a combat, meant to prove who were the best warriors, and most deserving of giving a prince to Israel.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, in this passage, the dreadful effects of civil wars, when people of the same nation take up arms against each other; and take particular notice of Abner's words, *ver. 26*, for they are applicable to all civil commotions, which constantly bring bitterness in the end; and this consideration should make people of all degrees very cautious how they engage in any thing of the kind.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, that David himself went not out to fight against the family of Saul, though there were frequent skirmishes between their respective followers. Ishbosheth is supposed to have been a person of mean abilities. It is likely Abner thought to have governed the kingdom himself under Ishbosheth's name. David had several sons, each of whom had a different mother; his having so many wives was afterwards the cause of great unhappiness, which he would have escaped had he had one wife only.

Ver. 6 to 22. Abner was not a good man; he declared for David, not because he had been chosen of the LORD, but
out

out of resentment to Ishbosheth, and to gain the favour of David. Men who act from wicked motives often conceal their designs, and conform to the commands of God only as it suits their interest; God knows their hypocrisy, but lets them alone, and brings about the designs of his providence by their means. Abner was thus made an instrument to accomplish the promises God had made to David that he would cause him to reign over all Israel.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, that Abner did not long enjoy the fruits of his hypocrisy; he fell a victim to Joab's jealousy and revenge. This fact teaches us how uncertain all the purposes of men are. He had formed great projects, and promised great things, but behold they were all defeated, and *he died as a fool dieth*; but Joab's was a very treacherous action. The curses which David pronounced upon Joab proceeded from his love to his people; he was afraid lest the action Joab had committed would bring a curse upon the nation, therefore he prayed that it might rather fall upon Joab himself. Joab deserved to be put to death for killing Abner in cool blood, but David was fearful of making great disturbances if he did it at that time. David's pious lamentations over Abner showed the people that he was perfectly innocent of his death.

CHAPTER IV.

The men who slew Ishbosheth thought to please David, but he did not desire to gain the tribes by any act of cruelty; he had sworn to Saul that *he would not cut off his seed after him, nor destroy his name out of his father's house.* See 1st Book of Samuel, chap. xxiv. ver. 22, and he religiously observed his oath. David called Ishbosheth a righteous person, because he had done no injury at all to the men who slew him. The severe punishment David inflicted upon them, showed that he abhorred all acts of treachery, and did not desire to have the whole kingdom until God saw fit.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, that before this time David was king over the tribe of Judah only, but that all the other tribes submitted to him upon the death of Ishbosheth, Saul's son. In the 11th and 12th chapters of the 1st Book of Chronicles, there is an account of the mighty men who went to Hebron to make David king over all Israel.

Ver. 6 to 11. The words, *Except thou take away the blind and lame thou shalt not come in hither*, signified that the Jebusites held David in such contempt that the blind and the lame were enough to defend the city against him, but they soon found their mistake, for Zion was the city which the LORD had chosen for himself, and it was David's duty as king of Israel to recover it from the idolaters who were in possession of it. The blind and the lame were some of these idolaters, on which account alone they were hated of David's soul; he was of too humane a temper to hate any on account of natural infirmity. After this victory David is supposed to have written the 115th Psalm.

Ver. 11 to 17. Tyre was a city in Phœnicia, which had lately risen to great wealth; it abounded with cedar trees, and with workmen skilled in the art of building. The friendship of Hiram, king of Tyre, was afterwards of great service to David and Solomon. Jerusalem was, in David's time, a very fine city; in the midst of it, upon mount Sion, stood the king's palace, mentioned *ver. 11*. When it was finished, and David was going to take possession of it, he is supposed to have penned the 101st Psalm.

Observe, that the victories recorded in this chapter plainly show that David acted as the *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, and that the blessing of the LORD attended him.

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe, that on this occasion the LORD wrought a miracle by causing the Philistines to hear a noise as if a great army was in their rear; this confirmed to the Israelites that the LORD was with them, and that it was He who defeated their enemies. It is supposed that when they returned back to Jerusalem the 118th Psalm was publicly sung.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 12. The place called here *Baale of Judah*, was Kirjath-jearim. Observe, that as soon as David was put in peaceable possession of his kingdom, his first care was to bring the ARK back, for he knew there could be no happiness for him or his people, unless the worship of God was properly attended to. Instead of being put on a *new cart*, as it had been by the Philistines, the ARK should have been carried by Levites; *see Numbers, chap. iv. ver. 15*; Uzzah therefore was guilty of an irreverent act in touching it; and we may judge that he was struck dead for this trespass, chiefly to inspire David and the Israelites with reverence for the ARK, which was to remain at Jerusalem; also to teach them not to depart in the least from the *manner* the LORD had commanded the ARK to be carried, but to observe the greatest exactness possible in keeping the divine ordinances. The expression, *ver. 8, David was displeased*, signified only that he was *grieved and disappointed*.

Ver. 12 to 20. It seems, that before the removal of the ARK from Kirjath-jearim, David was not perfectly acquainted with the law of Moses. The ARK had been in a manner forgotten. Religion was but little attended to in the days of Saul. David and his people had been constantly engaged in war, and though he was naturally very pious, he had not much opportunity of attending public worship in the right way; but after the death of Uzzah, they all set themselves to consider and learn how they ought to proceed in bringing the ARK from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem. The procession was a very solemn one. The priests and Levites were arrayed in white linen, and the king laid aside his royal robes, and attired himself in a long white garment, over which he put an ephod. In the *16th chapter of the 1st Book of Chronicles*, there is a farther account of this solemnity.

Ver. 20 to the end. Observe, that Michal's pride was offended because David had stripped himself of his royal robes, and mixed with the other attendants upon the ARK; but David thought he could not humble himself too much before the LORD; and, as he had a talent for music, he chose to
employ

employ it to the praise and glory of God. David on this occasion set a good example to all people, but especially to princes, of zeal for the worship of God. He also showed great prudence by taking warning from the transgression and punishment of Uzzah; and his mild reply to Michal should teach all persons not to be ashamed of piety and religion, for the scoffings of the ungodly and profane should always be despised when the honour of God is in question.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 18. David's desire to build a house for the LORD, that is, a temple, or church, for public worship, showed the piety of his heart; but Nathan should have consulted the LORD before he advised David to satisfy this desire. Observe, however, that great promises were made to David, which shows, that if God does not always see fit that designs good in themselves should be executed just at the time we wish, he is pleased with them, and will reward us for our good intentions.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, in this excellent prayer, the faith and strong dependance which David placed in the promises of God, and his readiness to submit to the LORD's will in all things.

CHAPTER VIII.

As the Israelites were not yet in full possession of the promised land, it was David's business and duty to drive out the heathen who inhabited some parts of it, and this chapter gives an account of several victories he gained over them. The Philistines were inveterate enemies to the Israelites. From *ver. 2*, it appears, that, having conquered Moab, David divided the Moabites into two parts, putting those who had been active in the war to death, sparing the lives of those who had not come out against him, only making them tributary. Zobah was in the land of Syria. The Syrians were at that time a great and powerful people; Syria was divided into many little kingdoms, of which Zobah was one. Hadadezer

was

was a great and ambitious prince, and came against David with a numerous army; but it was in vain to oppose him whom the LORD protected. Hamath was one of the kingdoms of Syria. David dedicated the silver and gold to the LORD, as an acknowledgment that it was the LORD who gave success to his arms, and these things were afterwards used in the temple which Solomon built.

The prophecy of Isaac, *Genesis, chap. xxvii. ver. 29*, respecting the nations which should proceed from his two sons Esau and Jacob, was fulfilled when the Edomites, who descended from Esau, became subject to the Israelites. Observe, that God continued his favours and blessings to David; and that David, on his part, ascribed all the glory to God. Also, *ver. 16, &c.* that David being now established in his kingdom had officers of state under him.

CHAPTER IX.

While David's kingdom was in an unsettled state, he could not introduce into it one of Saul's family: neither did he know that there was one of Jonathan's sons alive, but he had not forgot his covenant with Jonathan, *1 Sam. chap. xx. ver. 15*, nor the oath he had taken at the desire of Saul, *1 Sam. chap. xxiv. ver. 22*, and his conduct towards Mephibosheth, shows that he was not only a kind and faithful friend, but a just and upright man. From his example we should learn to remember our friends after their death, to show kindness to their children after them, and to perform faithfully the promises we at any time make.

CHAPTER X.

David's war against the Ammonites was very just, and the LORD showed that he approved it by the success he gave to the Israelites.

CHAPTER XI.

In this chapter we have an account of the greatest sin that David ever committed, and a most dreadful one it was, and particularly in him who was so well acquainted with his duty. We should learn from hence to turn away our eyes from every thing that may raise sinful desires, as our LORD JESUS CHRIST exhorts us in the gospel, particularly in his sermon on the mount, *Matthew, chap. v. ver. 27, 28*, and to stifle evil thoughts when they first arise in the breast, because when they are not resisted Satan takes possession of the heart, and hurries men on from sin to sin, as in the case of David. We must be very careful not to look upon this dreadful crime as one of those sins which good men fall into through weakness and infirmity, for it was of a most heinous nature. Neither must we imagine that David in his fall was in a state of grace and salvation. If his penitence and humiliation had not been proportioned to the greatness of his transgression, he would have perished. Instead of making an ill use of this example, as many persons have done, it should teach every one who is exposed to temptations of the like nature to watch over themselves with the greatest care, and to remember that the Christian religion condemns all kinds of impurity; therefore, no one can commit such offences as David's, in respect to the wife of Uriah, without highly displeasing God.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that the LORD sent his prophet to bring David to a sense of his sin, and to a public confession of it; and that Nathan did this with so much prudence as to lead David, without knowing it, to pronounce sentence upon himself; the prophet then, in the name of the LORD, denounced a heavy sentence against him.

Ver. 13 to 15. Observe, that David did not offer to make excuses for his guilt, but immediately confessed it, on which Nathan assured him, in the name of the LORD, that his sin should be pardoned, and his life spared; but the prophet did

not

not recal the sentence which he had before pronounced, so that David was to expect great family troubles to fall upon him.

Ver. 15 to the end. David felt extraordinary grief for his child's illness, because it was inflicted on account of his sin; but when the child was dead, he knew that it was his duty to resign himself to the will of GOD who had seen fit to take the innocent babe to a better world. The birth of Solomon, and the victory over the Ammonites, showed that the LORD had accepted David's penitence. Observe, from this chapter, that the sins which David committed are very heinous in the sight of GOD, and that, although GOD spares the lives of truly penitent sinners, and forgives them so as not to decree them to everlasting torments, he usually inflicts temporal punishments upon them.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 23. Amnon's committing incest with his sister was a horrid crime; and this shocking history shows us how dangerous it is to give way to unlawful desires, or to take the advice of false friends and flatterers, and none ought to be considered as a true friend who advises us to commit sin. Observe, that David now began to feel the evil rising upon him in his own house, which the LORD, knowing what his sons would do, had foretold by the prophet Nathan.

Ver. 23 to the end. Absalom was guilty of a very heinous sin in killing his brother, yet GOD permitted it for the punishment of Amnon, and the chastisement of David, whose grief on this occasion was very great.

There are some sins in particular which GOD punishes in this world to keep up and improve in sinners a sense of their sins, and make them examples to others. David had offended GOD by adultery and murder, and he was punished by the incest of Amnon, and afterwards by his death; so that Amnon, Tamer, and Absalom, were scourges in the hands of GOD, for his chastisement. Great afflictions are absolutely necessary for great sinners, and men are frequently punished by sins of the same nature with those they have committed. People, who commit such crimes as that for which David was

so severely chastised, most commonly meet with the punishment in their own family. Thus, by the justice of God, wicked people are made instruments of punishment to others. When these things happened to David, he must have reflected upon himself for the bad example he had set to his sons in the affair of Uriah.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 28. David's readiness to pardon Absalom shows that he had great tenderness of heart. Joab was a very artful man, but at this time he appears to have had a sincere friendship for Absalom.

Ver. 28 to the end. From Joab's refusing to go to Absalom when he sent for him, we may suppose he was displeased with his conduct. Absalom was very ungrateful in doing an injury to a person who had conferred such an obligation upon him; but he was a vain young prince, and could not be satisfied in retirement; he wanted to make a figure at court, and to gain popularity. When his father suffered Absalom to return to Jerusalem, he little thought what wicked designs this unnatural son was forming against him.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that Absalom was not contented to ride upon a mule, as his father did, he followed the example of the princes of the heathen nations, and, contrary to the law of God for the kings of Israel, he *multiplied horses to himself*. He also used every artifice in his power to gain the affections of the people, that they might make him king instead of David, and many of the people suffered themselves to be deceived by him. The expression after *forty years*, means that Absalom was forty years old. He acted the part of a hypocrite in pretending to have made a vow, but David being very religious himself did not suspect him. Observe, that though David was a very good king, and had able ministers under him, so that no man had just cause

cause to complain of his government, the people suffered themselves to be led away by Absalom's fine speeches and promises.

Ver. 13 to 30. From David's behaviour we may judge that the threatening of the LORD, denounced by Nathan the prophet, came to his mind. He saw evil rising upon him from his own house, and being fearful that the holy city of Jerusalem would be defiled with blood, he resolved to flee away from it. Ittai was originally a Philistine, but it seems he was a proselyte to the true religion, and had been banished from his own country. David would not presume to have the Ark of the LORD carried before him when he was sensible he was suffering chastisement for his sins.

Ver. 30 to the end. Mount Olivet was about a mile distant from Jerusalem. Observe, that David on this occasion appeared as a true penitent, and he must have felt the bitterest grief at the ingratitude of his own son, to whom he had been a kind and tender parent. David had no design to injure Absalom when he sent Hushai to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel; it was the most likely means to prevent bloodshed. Observe, in this chapter, that the evils which the LORD threatened by the prophet Nathan came fast upon David, and that he submitted to them with the utmost resignation. GOD knew he would do so when he commanded Nathan to assure him that his sin was pardoned, and that he should not die. David's prayer, in respect to Ahithophel, shows that he had recourse to GOD in all his troubles, and that while he suffered for his sins he still trusted in divine mercy.

Absalom's success in raising an army to go against his father, shows how easily ignorant people are persuaded to turn against the government they live under. Whatever evils they suffer they are ready to lay to the charge of their king and governor, and to wish for a change, not considering that it will most likely be a change for the worse, if they, by rising, make a disturbance in the nation, for nothing is so bad for all ranks of people as a civil war.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 5. The supply which Ziba brought was so seasonable, and David's mind was so hurt by his son's rebellion, that he too easily believed the false report against Mephibosheth, but he should not have rewarded Ziba without inquiring into the truth.

Ver. 5 to 15. The LORD permitted Shimei thus to insult David. This is all we are to understand by David's words at the latter end of *ver. 11*.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that David was right in supposing Absalom would hasten to Jerusalem, for he had taken quiet possession, and was going to call a council when Hushai arrived. Hushai was not sincere in what he said to Absalom, but if ever deceit might be practised it was in such a case as this, to prevent a son from murdering his father and his king. By *ver. 20*, it appears that Ahithophel had been a very wise counsellor to David, yet he gave Absalom very wicked advice. This the LORD foresaw when he sent Nathan unto him. No peace could be expected betwixt David and Absalom after this.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 27. Observe, that Ahithophel's advice was certainly the most likely means to get king David into their power, and that Absalom approved his wicked counsel, which would have been followed had not Hushai been at Jerusalem to defeat it. David could not but rejoice when Ahithophel, his greatest enemy, was dead.

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe, that David had soon a large army and plenty of provisions.

From Absalom's behaviour we are led to see that those who are undutiful and cruel to their parents are capable of every sin. Take notice that the care of Divine Providence was shown in the success of Hushai's counsel, in the preservation of Jonathan and Ahimaaz, and in the succours that were brought to David. The tragical fate of Ahithophel,
who

who was forsaken of God and given up to his own passions, is a remarkable instance of divine vengeance upon traitors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, that David was under the necessity of using means for the security of his friends and followers, neither could he without sin desert the throne on which God had placed him. He was the *Lord's anointed*, as such, it was his duty to punish sedition and rebellion, even in his own son, but he was doubtless glad to yield to the intreaties of his officers rather than to head the troops himself on this occasion; and his injunctions to his generals and captains, *ver. 5*, show his great affection for Absalom.

Ver. 9 to 19. It is remarkable that Absalom met with the fate to which the *law* condemned traitors and parricides, namely, *hanging on a tree*; and his hair, of which he was so proud, became the instrument of his punishment. Joab was a man of a violent temper, and he thought nothing of the king's commands when he had Absalom in his power, and the soldiers were ready to follow the example of their leader.

Ver. 19 to the end. David, without doubt, suffered great anxiety while the two armies were engaged: his lamentation upon the death of Absalom shows that he felt the grief of a tender parent for a son who was cut off in a course of wickedness. Observe, in this chapter, the end of Absalom's rebellion and the punishment which God inflicted upon an undutiful and impious son, who would have deprived his father of his kingdom and his life; also, the fate of the people who joined with him in this unrighteous design, of whom there fell twenty thousand. This should serve as a warning to all children who set themselves against their parents, and to all people who are ready to join with those who want to kill their king, and to change the government of a nation, in order to serve their own wicked purposes.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 16. Joab knew that if David gave himself up to grief, many bad consequences might follow ; had he told the king of this in a respectful manner he would have acted the part of a faithful friend and subject, but he had a hard heart, and made no allowance for the tenderness of a parent ; however, David followed his advice, because he knew it was right to do so. Observe, that the fate of Absalom, and of those who lost their lives in his cause, brought the rest of the people to reflect on their folly in rebelling against their good old king, and they were now eager to see him restored to the throne. This is usually the case after a rebellion ; when people's passions are cooled they are glad to restore the former order of things. David was disposed to forgive all offences, and promised to make Amasa captain of his host, because he saw the people liked him, and it was fit Joab should be removed as he had behaved in so insolent a manner.

Ver. 16 to 41. David's behaviour to Shimei contains a good lesson for all who have received injuries ; it shows that he had great gentleness of disposition, and was of a very forgiving temper. If this had not been his character, a man who had so cruelly insulted him in the day of his distress would scarcely have hoped to find mercy from him.

By David's answer to Mephibosheth he appears to have doubted his sincerity. Barzillai was a faithful subject, and the king was willing to reward him for his services. We should learn from David's example never to be ungrateful to our friends, but to make the best return in our power for the favours we receive.

Ver. 41. When fellow-subjects have been used to quarrel it is hard to settle them in peace again. It would not have been safe for David to go back to Jerusalem till he was assured the tribe of Judah would open the gates to receive him ; besides, Judah was the king's own tribe ; but the other tribes were jealous of him for expressing his regard for it.

CHAPTER XX.

Sheba took advantage of the discontent of the tribes of Israel to raise a new rebellion. The wise woman's address to Joab signified that if he would offer peace to the inhabitants of the city, they would give up the man who had set himself up against David. Joab's cruelty to Amasa shows how dangerous it is to give way to jealousy and anger; and in Amasa's death we see the just judgment of God who suffered him to fall for having rebelled against his lawful king. The rebellion of Sheba was a fresh chastisement to David. Observe, that many calamities fell upon David after he had committed the sins of adultery and murder, by which we are taught that those who are guilty of these crimes sometimes receive their punishment in the same way in which they have offended, in order to make them sensible of their sins; and when sinners improve by such correction, the LORD comforts and pardons them as he pardoned David.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 15. This chapter shows us that God sent a famine upon David's kingdom, because Saul had killed some of the Gibeonites contrary to the treaty made between their ancestors and Joshua about four hundred years before, *see Joshua, chap. ix.* and nothing but the death of Saul's sons could remove this dreadful visitation. This shows that treaties which have been made by oath, even such as have been long made and were obtained by surprise, ought to be religiously kept; and that the violation of oaths and promises brings down the judgments of God not only upon particular persons but upon families and nations. Wicked people leave a curse upon their posterity. Observe, how very religiously David kept the covenant he had made with his friend Jonathan.

Ver. 15 to the end. We have here, in the compass of a few verses, an account of four wars with the Philistines, each of which are supposed to have lasted a considerable time; probably Absalom's rebellion encouraged the Philistines to begin them.

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The Philistines had at that time several giants among them, all it seems of the kindred of Goliath ; but GOD, who had assisted David in his younger years to defeat the champion of the Philistines, assisted his valiant officers in subduing the others. The Israelites, insisting that David should go no more out to battle because he was old and feeble, showed that they had a great respect and value for him.

CHAPTER XXII.

The divine song in this chapter is almost word for word the same with the 18th *Psalm*. We should learn from it to preserve the remembrance of those dangers to which we have been exposed, and from which GOD has graciously delivered us, that we may be ready at all times to testify our gratitude, and to offer up our praises and thanksgivings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 8. In these *last words*, as they are called, David gives a description of a good prince, whom he compares to the sun, which, by its rays, enlightens the earth after showers, and makes it fruitful ; they also contain a prophecy relating to the Messiah, who was to arise from his family, and bless the people of Israel, while GOD's judgments would be poured out upon the wicked, whom he compares to thorns that are cut down and burnt.

Ver. 8 to the end. Observe, that David had a number of valiant men in his service. The action of those who went to draw water for their king at the hazard of their lives, was a lively proof of their courage and of their love for him ; and David's refusing to drink it, was a great instance of self-denial and prudence, which showed that he valued the lives of his officers too highly to suffer them to be exposed for his private advantage.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 18. David sinned in numbering the people, because he did it without necessity, contrary to the command of God, and in the pride of his heart, and it was the worse as he was warned by Joab and his other officers not to do so. Observe, *ver. 10*, that David's conscience reproached him for his sin, and he humbled himself; but God saw fit to bring a plague upon the land in order to punish David and the Israelites, and also to warn future kings not to number their subjects in the pride of their hearts, and their people not to neglect the divine commandment. Observe, that the LORD gave David the choice of three plagues to try him, and David, by his choice, showed that he resigned himself entirely into the hand of God. A pestilence is a mortal sickness which carries off a number of people very suddenly. From *ver. 15, 16*, we learn that angels are employed by the Almighty in executing his judgments.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that it pleased God that the place where the plague stopped should be consecrated to himself, and this spot David devoted to the LORD as the place where the temple should be built; but he chose that the offering should be his own, therefore he purchased the threshing floor of Araunah. Mount Moriah was the very place where Abraham offered up his son Isaac.

The pardon granted to David in consequence of his repentance and sacrifice, shows that the LORD's anger is turned away, and that he shows mercy to sinners when they are sincerely humbled, and have recourse to his bounty and mercy.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

VERSE 1 to 32. Adonijah, after Absalom's death, was David's eldest son; but the kingdom of Israel being that which the LORD had chosen for himself, no king was to reign but by his appointment, *see Deuteronomy, chap. xvii.* Saul and David had been anointed by GOD's command, and Solomon had been named as David's successor, which Adonijah, as well as those who joined with him, doubtless knew, therefore it was presumptuous in him to set himself up as king, and in them to support him. Observe, that Adonijah's ambitious views were soon defeated. At what time David swore to Bathsheba that Solomon should sit upon the throne is not mentioned, but he had done it from its being revealed to him that GOD had chosen Solomon. This oath David, being near his end, solemnly ratified.

Ver. 32 to 50. Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah, were true and faithful servants to king David. Observe, that it must have been a great satisfaction and comfort to David to see the son, whom the LORD had chosen, seated upon the throne before he died.

Ver. 50 to the end. Adonijah fled to the altar and caught hold of the horns of it, because he thought he should not be slain there. Solomon was very ready to spare his life, and pardon his offence, on his returning to his duty.

From this chapter we should learn that nothing can hinder the execution of the designs of Providence, that whatever men do to prevent them only serves to hasten them, and that criminal attempts turn to the confusion of the authors. In the *22d and following chapters of the first Book of Chronicles*, there is an account of the preparations which David made for the TEMPLE of the LORD, and the excellent advice he gave to Solomon his son.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that when David found his end approaching, his first care was that Solomon should keep the commandments of the LORD; and his next, that he should peaceably possess the kingdom of Israel. The directions he gave concerning Joab and Shimei related to the welfare of the kingdom, and are not to be considered as signs of David's being blood-thirsty and revengeful; on the contrary he had been too forbearing towards these men, who, according to the nature of the kingdom of Israel, ought not to have been spared so long, because they had been guilty of crimes for which the *law of God* condemned them to death; but there is no occasion for Christians to dwell on the considerations of such passages of Scripture as relate particularly to the affairs of the house of Israel. David's general behaviour to his enemies gives us reason to think that he was ready to forgive every private injury. Observe, that his reign was long and prosperous, though he met with many trials and afflictions.

Ver. 13 to the end. Adonijah's design in wishing to marry Abilhag, who had been his father's wife, without doubt was to strengthen his interest that he might obtain the kingdom, and Abiathar and Joab would have joined with him; they were, therefore, all three dangerous persons, and it was proper that Adonijah and Joab should be put to death, and Abiathar removed from his sacred office. Shimei might have kept himself within the bounds prescribed him, which looks as if Solomon understood his father's injunction *to bring his hoary head down to the grave with blood*, not to relate to the crime which David had pardoned, but to any future transgressions. But in respect to Solomon's conduct on this occasion, it is sufficient to observe, that in every state it is necessary for princes to use severity, and take away the lives of such as disturb the public peace and tranquillity; and that blood-thirsty, unjust, and seditious men, such as Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei, receive at last the reward of their wicked deeds.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 5. The heathens sacrificed to their idols upon *high places*, but the service of the Israelites was very different from the service of the idolaters, for their sacrifices were appointed by the *law of Moses*, whereas the heathens had a number of superstitious rites and ceremonies, some of which were most abominable.

Ver. 5 to 16. Observe, that GOD granted a peculiar favour to Solomon when he gave him the liberty to ask what he pleased, and Solomon gave an instance of his wisdom and piety when he prayed for skill and understanding to enable him to do his duty as king of Israel, which was, in fact, praying for the help of the HOLY SPIRIT. Though the LORD's promise was conveyed to Solomon in a dream, he was fully convinced that it was a reality. The manner in which GOD granted Solomon's prayer proves that the Almighty is ever ready to grant the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT to those who ask them, besides which, he often grants them temporal blessings without their asking.

Ver. 16 to the end. Solomon showed his wisdom by trying the affection of the two mothers, by which he discovered the true parent.

CHAPTER IV.

Observe, that GOD raised Solomon to the highest pitch of earthly glory, granting him riches and power beyond the greatest kings of the earth; and such wisdom and knowledge as made him vastly superior to the wisest men in the world. He had only prayed for that wisdom which would enable him to perform his duty, *religious wisdom*; but GOD gave him besides a larger share than any other man ever had, of that which the world usually calls wisdom, namely, skill in various arts and sciences. These gifts were bestowed upon Solomon chiefly that he might promote the glory of GOD by building the temple at Jerusalem, and establishing divine service in it,
and

and that he might promote the happiness of God's chosen people by governing them with justice and clemency.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that as soon as Solomon was seated on the throne, he began to prepare for building the house of the LORD according to the directions he had received from David his father, which are to be found in the 1st and 2^d Book of *Chronicles*. Though Hiram reigned over *heathens*, he appears to have been a religious good man, and a worshipper of the true God. The Tyrians and Sidonians, that is, the people of Tyre and Sidon, had never been particular enemies to Israel, and David was not commanded to destroy them. Lebanon was a noble forest on the north of Canaan, so that it belonged to Solomon; but the people of Israel having been chiefly trained to war in David's time, were not skilled like the Sidonians in arts and manufactures, neither had they experience in the management of ships like the Tyrians.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, that there was great resemblance betwixt the *Tabernacle* which was made in the days of Moses and Solomon's Temple, only the latter was to be fixed, and it was made of more lasting materials than the other. There was the same place to receive the Ark with the mercy seat, which might be considered as God's earthly throne on which he manifested his presence. Instead of the curtains and boards which composed the different courts of the Tabernacle, the Temple was built with the most costly stones and timbers that could be procured, and ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones.

Ver. 19 to the end. The *Oracle* was a square room within the temple, built to receive the Ark. Observe, that in building and furnishing the house of the LORD, Solomon employed a considerable part of the immense treasures God had given him, and that he spared nothing which might engage his subjects and all the neighbouring nations to reverence

rence the HOUSE OF THE LORD, by which he showed his zeal for the honour of God.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that the buildings here described were suitable to the state of grandeur to which it pleased the LORD to raise the kingdom of Israel. Hiram, the principal Tyrian workman, seems to have been inspired for the works of the temple, as Bezaleel and Aholiab were for those of the tabernacle. The ornaments described were, no doubt, very beautiful. The brazen sea and lavers were for the washing and purifications which the LORD required to be performed by the priests and Levites.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that this chapter gives an account of the dedication of the temple. By *dedication*, is meant setting it apart for the service and worship of God. It is related in the *6th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*, that king David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, and placed it in the tabernacle with every testimony of reverence that it was in his power to show; but Solomon being possessed of greater riches, and being peaceably settled in his kingdom, was able to display more magnificence when he removed it from the tabernacle to the temple. Observe, *ver. 10, 11*, that it pleased the LORD to give the same token of his HOLY PRESENCE in the temple as he had before done in the tabernacle. *See Exodus, chap. xl. ver. 34, 35.*

Ver. 12 to 22. As GOD is no respecter of persons, we may be certain from his having, on these two memorable occasions, shown forth his glory in places dedicated to his worship, that he is present in all places of worship where the service is agreeable to his holy will and commandments. Observe, that before Solomon offered his prayer he *blessed the people*, and reminded them of the LORD's gracious promises, and the fulfilment of them, and likewise of the covenant he had

had made with their forefathers. For an account of the *tables of testimony*, see *Deuteronomy*, chap. x. ver. 1 to 6.

Ver. 22 to the end. Consider with attention this very fine and excellent prayer, which proves that Solomon's religion at that time was quite pure, that he considered the temple as a place where God would be present, but not confined, and which would be set apart chiefly for prayer, not for mere outward ceremonial service. We should learn from this that God is to be every where worshipped in *spirit and in truth*; that places set apart for his service should be had in reverence; and that we should consider them chiefly as houses of prayer, like the temple at Jerusalem. We should also, consider the several parts of this prayer of Solomon, as a pattern of public devotion; and lastly, we should observe with what fervency and joy Solomon gave thanks to God, and implored his blessing in behalf of all the people. The sacrifices offered at the dedication of the temple were such as the law of Moses required of the people of Israel; they were abolished by Christ, and a different kind of service required in respect to outward worship, yet the disposition of the heart should be the same in Christians as was required of the Israelites, see ver. 61. Observe, also, what Solomon said ver. 56, concerning the fulfilment of the divine promises. Call to mind the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respecting their seed or posterity, and consider what a great and glorious nation Israel was now become. The fulfilment of those divine promises was an earnest not only to the Israelites, but to all the nations upon earth, that the promises made to the patriarchs respecting the SAVIOUR of the WORLD, should also be fulfilled.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that the LORD, in order to show that he approved of the building of the temple, and of the prayer offered up at the dedication of it, entered into a covenant with Solomon. Take particular notice of the words of this covenant, as we should learn from it that neither king or people in any nation are to expect God's blessing to continue with them if they are disobedient to his holy laws. The truth

of the LORD's *threatenings* was afterwards proved by the Jews, when they provoked the LORD, as the truth of the *divine promises* had been, when they obeyed him.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, that the palace which Solomon built for himself was much longer in hand than the house of the LORD, which shows that he preferred the honour of God to his own grandeur. Eloth and Ezion-Geber were two ports which David had gained; it is not exactly known where they, or the places called Ophir and Tarshish, were situated, but the trade carried on from them was the same as that now in the hands of our East India merchants,

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 14. The Queen of Sheba, who came to king Solomon, is supposed to have been descended from Keturah, (who was Abraham's wife, after the death of Sarah,) and to have reigned over some part of Arabia. It appears that she believed in the LORD GOD, though it is most probable that, like other Gentiles, she worshipped idols also. Her taking so long a journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, showed that she had an earnest desire to know the TRUTH, and we find her commended by our blessed Saviour himself when he was reproving the unbelieving Jews for refusing to hear him. See *Matthew, chap. xii. ver. 42; Luke, chap. xi. ver. 31.*

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, how wonderful the wisdom, magnificence, and riches of Solomon were; but Solomon did not continue to make a good use of the gifts bestowed upon him, for in his prosperity he slighted that wisdom for which he had prayed in the beginning of his reign, namely, *a wise and understanding heart to rule the people committed to his care*, and set his mind upon the *pomps and pleasures* of this life, as he tells us himself in the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. He also departed from the commandments of the LORD by *multiplying horses* to himself, and also by heaping up riches to himself. Compare this part of the history of Solomon with the instructions given by Moses concerning the kings of Israel, *Deuteronomy, chap. xvii. ver. 16, &c.* Recollect also the LORD's promises to Solomon himself, *1 Kings, chap. iii. ver. 14, and chap. ix. ver. 4.*

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 9. Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's first wife. He should not have gone to Egypt for a wife any more than for horses, according to the law of GOD, though it is likely Pharaoh's daughter became a proselyte, for it is not said that *she* turned his heart after the gods of Egypt; but his other wives were all idolatresses, and there was scarce an idol upon earth that Solomon did not worship or raise altars to.

Ver. 9 to 40. Observe, here, that the LORD put his threatenings in force against Solomon, but in such a manner as to fulfil at the same time his promises to David. By the LORD's stirring up adversaries against Solomon, we may understand that the LORD suffered Hadad and Rezon, who were enemies to the house of David, to follow their own will, instead of making them afraid of Solomon. From *ver. 37*, it appears that Jeroboam, who was one of Solomon's officers, had formed a design to get the kingdom from Solomon, and that he went out of Jerusalem with the intent of raising a conspiracy against him. The LORD had determined Jeroboam should reign over *ten tribes*, and sent the prophet Ahijah to declare his will to him, that Jeroboam might not think he gained the kingdom by his own power. It was customary for prophets to make use of signs as Ahijah did, in order to render their predictions more striking. Observe, *ver. 32, 33*, on what account it was that the LORD resolved to rend or divide the kingdom of Israel; also, for *whose sake* it was suffered to remain with Solomon for his life, and that one tribe was kept back from Jeroboam. Observe, likewise, the LORD's promise to Jeroboam, *ver. 38*.

Ver. 40 to the end. Observe, that Solomon instead of humbling himself and being thankful to GOD for his mercy and forbearance, wanted to defeat the divine purposes by killing Jeroboam; and that Jeroboam laid aside his purpose of setting himself up against Solomon after the prophet met him. Solomon's life most probably was shortened by his excesses, for he was only 58 years old when he died. The history of this king should teach those who have been

religious in their youth to be greatly upon their guard not to trust to the wisdom and understanding with which God may have endowed them, not only to pray daily for wisdom to enable them to do their duty, or in other words, for the *gift of the HOLY SPIRIT*, but to follow its dictates, lest they be led away by the vanities of this life and lose the favour of God. We may also learn from this chapter that it is God who exalteth and abaseth kings, and that disposeth of kingdoms.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 16. Rehoboam showed that he was not a religious prince by going from Jerusalem, where the temple was, to Shechem. The people of Israel were greatly disaffected and ready to rebel at the latter end of Solomon's reign, but the power of the LORD restrained them. After his death they were left to follow their own wills, and they sent for Jeroboam to head them. It does not appear from Solomon's history that he any way oppressed his subjects, but they complained of grievances in order to justify themselves for their discontent, as is the usual way in most kingdoms. Rehoboam showed himself to be a very weak prince by taking the advice of *young men* instead of listening to the counsels of the *aged*. The LORD suffered the people to prevail against him, because he had resolved to rend the kingdom on account of the idolatries practised in it. *See chap. xi. ver. 32, 33.*

Ver. 16 to 21. Observe, that the *kingdom of Israel* was now divided into *two parts*, one consisting of *ten tribes* under Jeroboam, which was still called the *kingdom of Israel*, the other consisting of *the tribe of Judah*, which was called the *kingdom of Judah*; among the tribe of Judah were reckoned the few that remained of the tribe of Benjamin, and the priests and Levites.

Ver. 21 to 25. Take notice as you proceed with the history that from the days of Solomon we read no more of the GLORY OF THE LORD appearing in the temple; but though the LORD saw fit on account of the idolatries that had defiled the land of Israel, to withdraw his visible presence from it, he graciously sent prophets from time to time to make his will known to his people, and Shemaiah was one of them. By
the

the *word of the LORD* coming to the prophets, we may understand that they were inspired of the LORD to deliver prophecies, to declare his will, and to do many things they would not otherwise have thought of doing. Observe, *ver. 24*, that Rehoboam was convinced by the prophet's declaration that it was the will of the LORD the kingdom should be divided, and that he and his people yielded to it.

Ver. 25 to the end. Jeroboam soon forgot what the LORD had graciously promised by his prophet, *see chap. xi. ver. 38*, and instead of drawing the people off from idolatry, he encouraged them in it. His fear was, that if the people went up to Jerusalem at the great festivals, as the LORD had commanded, Rehoboam would persuade them to return to him, and he could not afford to build another temple; so, in order to satisfy the people who were used to the worship of idols, he set up two golden calves, and appointed a priesthood for this idolatrous worship. This was the great crime which is so often mentioned in Scripture as *the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin*. By setting up the calves Jeroboam contrived at once to please the Egyptians and his own people, for the Egyptians worshipped a bull calling it the god *Apis*.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Take particular notice of the prophecy in *ver. 2*, which was exactly fulfilled above 300 years afterwards. The signs which happened when Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the LORD's prophet, were designed to show the people of Israel that the worship of the *golden calves* was displeasing to the LORD, and that those who set themselves up against him should not be suffered to prevail. It was the will of God that his prophet should have no farther communication with the idolatrous people of Israel than merely to deliver his message. Observe, that it was not till the young prophet had disobeyed the *express command* of the LORD, and believed the word of a *man* instead of the *word of the LORD*, that the old prophet was inspired to foretell his punishment, which was certainly a very just one for so great an offence. The fate of this prophet should teach all

people not to suffer themselves to be seduced from their known duty by any persuasions whatever. Observe, that the repentance of Jeroboam was of very short duration; he returned to his abominations, and brought the *curse of the LORD* upon his family.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 21. Jeroboam knew, that, as an idolater, he could not expect favour from GOD, therefore he tried to deceive the prophet; but instead of having the comfort he hoped for in hearing that his son should recover, he received a dreadful message. Jeroboam had, it seems, brought his family up to idolatry; the young prince, Abijah, was the only one who had any true religion, and he was mercifully taken away from the evil to come; had he lived he might have been drawn away like the rest. When good young people die we may conclude it is a blessing. Observe, *ver. 15*, that the people of Israel were to be punished, not for Jeroboam's personal offence, but for suffering themselves to be drawn away by him from the true worship of GOD.

Ver. 21 to the end. The people of the kingdom of Judah were very corrupt and provoked the LORD, but, *observe*, he spared them for David's sake, because their king was of his race; and because the LORD would not suffer the true religion to be lost in the world. The kingdom of Israel was in the height of its glory about the middle of Solomon's reign, when the king and people worshipped and served GOD in his holy temple and kept his commandments; but, from the time Solomon and his people began to worship idols, the glory of the kingdom declined. There was a very great change in its prosperity in the days of Rehoboam; this should have served as a warning to him, but it did not.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, that we have here an account of the reigns of some of the kings of Judah, and some of the kings of Israel. In the *13th chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles*, we have

have a farther history of Abijam, and of his wars with Jeroboam; it will be sufficient to remark here, that Abijam did not improve by the misfortunes of his father Rehoboam, but that the LORD was mindful of his promise to keep up the kingdom of Judah for David's sake.

Ver. 9 to 25. The expression, *ver. 14, his heart was perfect with the LORD*, signifies that Aza was not a worshipper of idols.

Ver. 25 to the end. Observe, that the LORD's threatening to the house of Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah, *chap. xiv.* soon began to be put in force. Nadab himself was a wicked idolater, and so, doubtless, were all the rest of Jeroboam's family. The curse which fell upon the Israelites was a proof to them how greatly God abhorred the idolatry which Jeroboam had introduced, yet it does not appear that they returned to their duty, neither did Baasha try to reform them; on the contrary, he led them on in their former sins.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, here, that the LORD sent a prophet to Baasha, as he had before done to Jeroboam, but not to make a like promise, only to denounce threatenings; for there was this difference between the two kings, Jeroboam was permitted by the LORD to take the kingdom of Israel, but Baasha set himself up as king without this permission. Observe, also, that the LORD's threatening to Baasha was soon fulfilled, first upon Elah, his son, and afterwards upon his whole house.

Ver. 15 to 23. Observe, that Zimri's reign was but of short continuance, and that he came to a dreadful end. He was a very wicked man, and when he cut off the house of Baasha he did it for the sake of taking his kingdom, and not with a view of fulfilling the will of the LORD, for he followed the same bad practices as they had done. The fate of these kings shows that Divine vengeance pursues the wicked, and in particular wicked princes. When God has made use of them to do justice, and to execute the decrees of his providence, he cuts them off and destroys them by the hand of others. But we should notice that all the kings of Israel con-

tinued to offend God by keeping up idolatry in the kingdom, notwithstanding the warnings which were given them, and the examples they had before their eyes.

Ver. 23 to the end. The city called Samaria, which Omri built, was the capital of the kingdom of Israel, as that of Jerusalem was of the kingdom of Judah; but the latter had this remarkable advantage, the temple of the LORD was in it, and God was there worshipped according to his holy ordinances; but the worship of Samaria was idolatrous. It is said of Omri that *he did worse than all that were before him*; we may therefore conclude that he increased the number of idols. It was a very great crime in Ahab as king of Israel to marry the daughter of a heathen prince, and Jezebel was a very wicked woman. The building a house, or temple, of Baal, was an open affront to the LORD GOD OF ISRAEL. It was customary for heathens to carry on their idol worship in groves, where they practised the greatest abominations. Jezebel was a cruel persecutor of the worshippers of the true God.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 17. The more the Israelites departed from God the more powerful were the means employed to bring them back to their duty. The drought and famine which Elijah was sent to foretell, was intended to punish the people for worshipping Baal, and to remind them that the LORD was the only God; and that they might know by whom this judgment was inflicted, the LORD sent the prophet Elijah to Ahab to give him notice of it beforehand. It was not merely to remove him out of the way of Ahab that the LORD sent Elijah first to Cherith and then to Zarephath, but that he might be made fully sensible of the protection of Providence. Our Saviour observes that Elijah was sent to Zarephath 'to a woman who was a stranger, rather than to the land of Israel, because the Israelites did not believe so truly in the God of Israel as the widow of Zarephath did, neither were they disposed to make as good a use of his mercies. The words, *ver. 9, Behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee*, signified that the LORD, in his good providence, had ordained

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that this woman should help Elijah's necessities, and that he should comfort her. The miracle of multiplying the meal and the oil, answered both these purposes. It often happens that the distresses of the indigent are relieved by means as unexpected, though not in a miraculous way, and whenever this happens it should be ascribed to the good providence of God. Observe, as a remarkable circumstance, that Elijah was sent into the very country Jezebel came from, to be protected from her fury.

Ver. 17 to the end. The miracle of restoring the woman's son to life, served to strengthen Elijah's faith, and likewise to show that he was really a prophet of the LORD. The widow of Zarephath was fully convinced that he was so. Observe, that it was not by any power the prophet had in himself, but by the power of the LORD, that the miracle was performed. In this respect the prophet was very much inferior to our Saviour, who performed miracles by his own power.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 17. The famine must have been very grievous in the land of Israel to make it necessary for the king himself to go out in search of forage for the cattle. Obadiah seems to have been a very religious man, though he was in a high office under Ahab. The act he performed showed his zeal for the honour of God as well as his humanity. The prophets, whom Jezebel destroyed, are supposed to have been persons who privately instructed those who were not worshippers of Baal, in their duty to God, and exhorted them to the performances of it. They had not the spirit of prophecy like Elijah, neither did they offer sacrifice or burn incense, nor was there a proper place in Samaria for them to do so; but they were most likely *disciples*, usually called *sons of the prophets*, belonging to the schools which Samuel first instituted, and which it is thought Jezebel intended to destroy. Those she caused to be put to death doubtless received the crown of martyrdom in heaven. Observe, that Ahab had taken great pains to find Elijah, but the LORD preserved his prophet. It must have been a great surprise to this wicked king

king to hear that Elijah was coming to meet him. It pleased GOD that his prophet should give notice of the approaching rains, as he had before done of the drought and famine, that all Israel might know that both the judgment and deliverance were wrought by the LORD.

Ver. 17 to 41. Observe, with what wonderful courage Elijah executed the commands of the LORD, trusting in divine protection. More than ONE GOD there cannot possibly be, for this name is sacred to the SUPREME BEING, the GREATEST OF ALL BEINGS, THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS. The question therefore to be decided betwixt Elijah and the prophets, or priests of Baal, was, *which was THE GOD*, the LORD, or *Baal*? The sending fire from heaven proved the LORD to be THE GOD beyond all dispute. The altar which Elijah repaired is supposed to have been built in the time of the Judges. As Jeroboam had set up idols as soon as he came to the throne, the LORD had not appointed any place for his worship in Samaria. The ceremonies used by the priests of Baal, show what strange cruel practices the heathens had in their superstitious worship, and all in honour of NOTHING, for an *idol* is but an imaginary *being* represented by a wooden or graven image, or any thing else, according to the fancy of the worshippers. In commanding the prophets of Baal to be put to death, Elijah acted according to the law of the LORD.

Ver. 41 to the end. Observe, that as soon as the people had given public marks of their repentance, the LORD sent rain. All the miracles wrought upon this memorable occasion were designed to recover the king and people of Israel from idolatry, and to preserve the knowledge of the true God in the kingdom, when it was in danger of being lost entirely.

As GOD would not endure that the Israelites should divide their worship between HIM and *idols*, neither will he endure that Christians should divide their love between HIM and the *world*, or that they should set up their *own reason* against his divine word, and make a religion for themselves, as those do who believe *some parts* of the gospel and not others, and keep *some* of GOD's commandments, and break others.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, that the LORD suffered Elijah to feel the infirmities of human nature lest he should be proud of the miracles wrought by his hand; but to show him he was not forsaken, an angel was sent to strengthen him and refresh him. The LORD's *speaking in a small still voice*, was a sign that He was graciously disposed to show lenity and forbearance towards the idolatrous people of Israel, and to preserve the land of Israel for those who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal.

Ver. 19 to the end. The LORD's commands to Elijah respecting Hazael and Jehu, show that God gave kings to the neighbouring nations as well as to Israel, and that the prophets of the LORD were respected among them. Benhadad was at that time purposing to go with a great army against Israel. God's commanding Elijah to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, shows that the LORD had not forsaken his people Israel, and that he takes care at all times to provide teachers in his church instead of those he sees fit to take away. Elisha seems to have been a man of considerable property, yet he willingly left all for God's sake.

From this chapter we learn, that even in the most corrupt times there is always a remnant of the faithful servants of God; that he watches over them for their good; and that when the wicked appear ready to root out true religion from the world, the LORD exerts his power for their destruction.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 22. What was Benhadad's pretence for invading the land of Israel we are not told; but Ahab was in no condition to oppose such a powerful enemy, for he could not depend on any help from Baal, neither could he hope for the favour of the LORD; but for the sake of the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, it pleased God to preserve the kingdom.

Ver. 22 to the end. The heathens fancied that there was a
great

great number of gods, and the Syrians supposed some of those gods favoured *them*, and some the Israelites, but the LORD showed, by this wonderful victory over their proud and wicked king, that he was the GOD *not only of the hills* but of the *vallies* also, the LORD of the whole earth. From this chapter we learn how GOD confounds the proud, and punishes such as fall upon others unjustly; and that he gives marks of his bounty even to the greatest finners to invite them to repentance. Observe, the threatening of the LORD, *ver. 42.*

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 17. Naboth could not comply with Ahab's desire without breaking the *law of the LORD*, which he resolved not to do on any account; *see Leviticus, chap. xxv. ver. 23; and Numbers, xxxvi. ver. 7.* The means used by Jezebel to procure Naboth's death, show that she was a very wicked woman; but Ahab, in consenting to his death, was quite as wicked as his queen. It is shocking to read that false witnesses could be found on this occasion, and that judges should be wicked enough to condemn the innocent.

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe, that Ahab and Jezebel had no reason to rejoice in the success of their wickedness. The LORD's message by Elijah, shows that punishment follows close upon great crimes, especially upon violence, and shedding of blood; and that the possession of goods unjustly gotten, is seldom lasting or happy. The character given of Ahab in *ver. 25, 26*, shows that he had arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness; yet, upon his repenting, his punishment was delayed for a time, but his repentance was of very short duration.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 29. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was a religious prince; probably he thought Ahab was converted when he went to visit him. There is a further account of Jehoshaphat's reign in the *18th chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles*, so, we will only remark here what relates to Ahab. The
prophets

prophets he inquired of were most probably the prophets of the groves. Micaiah was the only prophet of the LORD. Observe, that what Micaiah said, *ver. 15*, was delivered in a manner which made the king understand that he spake it in derision of the false prophets; and the account he gave of his prophetic vision proved that he did so. The meaning of these visions was, that the LORD would suffer Ahab to be deceived by false prophets, since he would not be satisfied with any prediction that was contrary to his own wishes and designs; but it was Ahab's own fault that he was deceived by them, because the LORD informed him by his prophet, that the other prophets were not inspired by his HOLY SPIRIT, but by a *lying spirit*. It is common in Scripture language to say the LORD *did* a thing when he only *permitted* it, because nothing can be done without God's permission, but God is not the author of evil.

Ver. 29 to 51. Observe, that Ahab seems to have gone to the field of battle with great apprehensions upon him, and Micaiah's prophecy was soon fulfilled, for when their king was killed *the Israelites were scattered upon the mountains of Gilead, like sheep having no shepherd*. Elijah's prediction was also accomplished by *the dogs licking up Ahab's blood*.

In the history of Ahab we have many strong instances of a particular providence, and of the justice of God's dealings with mankind, from which we learn that no evils happen by chance. Blessings of every kind are directed by the will of God, and no misfortune can happen without his divine permission. We should therefore be thankful to God for every circumstance of our happiness, and to him should we address our prayers for deliverance from dangers and distresses.

Ver. 51 to the end. Observe, that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, was as wicked as his parents.

SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

OBSERVE, that the threatenings of GOD concerning Ahab's family soon began to be fulfilled. Ahaziah dishonoured the LORD, first, by sending to consult an idol, and afterwards to *command* his prophet to appear before him. The description of Elijah's dress, shows that he was a man who despised the vanities of life, and thought it the highest honour he could possess to be distinguished as the *prophet of the LORD*. Observe, that Elijah spake *the word of the LORD*, not his *own private wish*, when he called for fire from heaven to destroy the two captains and their fifties. This judgment was sent to prove that Elijah was really the *prophet of the LORD*; and also to secure the prophet from the fury of Ahaziah, and punish the idolaters. The death of Ahaziah happening, according to the prediction of the prophet, shows that it was a judgment from heaven for his wickedness.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, that the LORD had revealed his purpose of taking Elijah to heaven, for it was known to himself, to Elisha, and all the sons of the prophets. Elijah was greatly beloved by them all, but particularly by Elisha, the person ordained to succeed him as the *prophet of the LORD*. The waters of Jordan dividing when Elijah smote them with his mantle, was a sign to him that GOD would conduct him as safely to heaven as he had conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan. From the number of the sons of the prophets, which remained after Jezebel's fury against them, it may be supposed that GOD graciously took one of their schools under his protection, in order that the true religion might not be lost in Israel. The SPIRIT which inspired
Elijah

Elijah was the SPIRIT OF THE LORD, and no *man* could bestow it; but Elijah could pray to GOD to grant the desire of Elisha, and it seems he did so, and requested a *sign* by which both he and his successor might know that the desire was granted. Elisha saw his dear master taken up, and knew from that circumstance that he should possess a *double portion of his spirit*. His words, *ver. 12*, signified that he considered himself in losing Elijah as a fatherless child losing the guide of his youth, and that he thought the Israelites sustained a great loss in this famous prophet, who had been a better defence to them than a powerful army. Observe, that the miraculous manner in which Elijah was taken from earth, proves that there is another world in which the servants of GOD are to be recompensed for the persecution and sufferings they meet with in this. When Elisha took the mantle of Elijah as the badge of his prophetic office; he was *the prophet of the LORD*; and he smote the waters of Jordan with it to prove whether GOD accepted him. The miracle which followed showed that the Lord had done so.

Ver. 15 to 19. Elisha, though he knew Elijah was taken up into heaven, yielded at last to the sons of the prophets lest they should think he was wanting in respect for his late master, or unwilling to resign his mantle.

Ver. 19 to 23. The miracle wrought at Jericho was a fresh proof that Elisha was the prophet of the Lord.

Ver. 23 to the end. Observe, that Bethel was one of the cities in which Jeroboam had set up a golden calf, and the inhabitants of the place were wicked idolaters. There is reason to think they were informed that Elisha was coming to it, and looking upon him as their professed adversary, they sent their children, or rather their *young people*, as the Hebrew word may be translated, to mock and ill treat him, not merely as an *old man*, but as the LORD's *prophet*. Their words, *ver. 23*, may be understood as desiring him in derision to go up to heaven as his master Elijah had done. It is probable these wicked youths would have killed the good prophet if the LORD had not cut them off. Elisha *curfed them in the name of the LORD*, that is, pronounced the curse which the LORD put into his mouth, and the judgment that followed plainly proved that it was the LORD's doing; and all young persons should learn from the history of this dreadful visitation to

pay due reverence not only to the ministers of God, but to all whose age and character entitle them to respect.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that Jehoram was an idolater though he did not worship Baal as his father and mother had done. The 4th verse shows the nature of the tribute which the king of Moab formerly paid, but which he refused to pay any longer. Jehoshaphat consented to go with Jehoram, because he had made a league with Ahab king of Israel, which he would not break; but he ought not to have made such a league with an idolatrous king of Israel, and he nearly lost his life when he went with Ahab against the Syrians. The king of Edom was subject to the king of Israel, and could not refuse to go with him. Observe, *ver. 10, 11*, the different sentiments of a king who was ready to reproach the LORD, and of one who placed his trust in the providence of God, and who was desirous of acting agreeably to the Divine will, which could only be known on this occasion by consulting a holy prophet.

Ver. 13 to the end. Elisha's anger proceeded from his zeal for the honour of GOD; when he found himself in the presence of so impious a king as Jehoram, his mind was so disturbed that he wished to calm it before he inquired the will of the LORD, well knowing that those who desire to hold communion with GOD should keep their spirits quiet and composed. Solemn music is a very great composer of the mind, and the prophet found it so. What he directed the kings to do, was as a *prophet speaking the word of the LORD*, who saw fit to put their faith to the proof. By having the ditches made, the kings showed that they believed the LORD's promises. Observe, that the Moabites were permitted to deceive themselves to their destruction, because they were not only unjust in rebelling against Israel, but they were also despisers of the LORD and his holy religion. It was the son of the king of Edom, not his own son, whom the king of Moab offered up as a burnt sacrifice; *see the prophecy of Amos, chap. ii. ver. 1*. This action shows what dreadful things were practised by idolaters. It is supposed that the king of Moab
hoped

hoped by this means to obtain the favour of Chemosh his idol. It was the height of idolatry to offer human sacrifices.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe, the faith and trust in God which this poor widow expressed, and how it was rewarded; and consider that though miracles are not to be expected in these days, yet in the common course of his providence God relieves, by means as unlooked for, the widows and orphans of his servants; no one therefore should despair, but place a firm trust in that almighty Being who has promised to be *a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow, even GOD in his holy habitation.*

Ver. 8 to 38. What is here related is supposed to have happened soon after the deliverance of the three kings from the Moabites, when the prophet was in high favour with the king of Israel, and could have asked any favour from him. Observe, that the Shunamite and her husband also feared the LORD, therefore their desire was granted; but by the death of the child they were both instructed how little those know what is best for them who desire any blessing in particular, for if it had not pleased God to restore the child to life by a miracle, his parents would have been more unhappy than if they had never had a child. Their son was restored as a reward for their faith, and for the kindness they had shown to Elisha as a prophet of the Lord.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 20. Naaman is supposed to have been the general who commanded in the famous battle in which Ahab, king of Israel, was slain. The little maid was an Israelite, a worshipper of the true GOD, who had been taken captive. Naaman believed what she said of the God of Israel, but he could not go into an enemy's country till he had obtained his king's leave. Observe, that the king of Syria was too proud to send his general to *the prophet of the LORD*; the king of Israel, by his behaviour when he had read the letter,

P

showed

showed that he believed in the almighty power of God; but neither did he send Naaman to the *prophet of the LORD*.

Observe, that Naaman expected to be treated with distinction as a great man; but he had dishonoured the LORD by going to the king of Israel, therefore the LORD's prophet would not honour him. Naaman's being cured by such a simple remedy, convinced him of the power of the God of Israel, and he now repented that he had ever been an idol worshipper. Naaman desired some of the earth of the land of Israel, probably with a view of raising an altar to the LORD in his own country. Elisha refused Naaman's presents, to show that a *prophet of the LORD* would not receive gifts.

Ver. 20 to the end. The history of Naaman shows that no station of life is free from misfortune, and that what we think the greatest evils frequently produce the greatest blessings. If Naaman had not had that loathsome disease, the leprosy, he might have continued to enjoy the favour of the king and the people, but he would have remained a stranger to God. Nothing but religion, and the favour of the greatest of Beings, can make us truly happy. We should also learn from this lesson that nothing can be hidden from the all-seeing eye of God; that God always brings wickedness to light, and the wicked to disgrace and punishment by some means or other; and people who gain things by dishonest means, generally bring a curse upon themselves and their families.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 8. It appears that there were a great many of the sons of the prophets at this time in Israel; who served to keep up the knowledge of the true God among the ten tribes. The causing iron to swim was a surprising miracle. Observe, that the man who lost the axe, showed a just and honest principle; he was particularly sorry for the loss, because the thing was *borrowed*, and the owner might set a value upon it beyond its real worth, or might suspect him of falsehood in saying that he had lost it, when perhaps he had not.

Ver. 8 to 24. Observe, that it was in order to confound the Syrians who were idolaters, that the LORD revealed to Elisha all the designs of the king of Syria, and delivered into the hands

hands of the prophet, and by his means into the hands of the king of Israel, the host of men that was sent against him. Observe, also, that on this occasion the LORD enabled the prophet and his servant to see the heavenly host who were to assist the army of Israel; from whence we learn that the holy angels of God are employed in protecting the servants of the LORD. Observe, also, that the same almighty Being who enlightened the eyes of the prophet, and his servant, darkened the eyes of Benhadad's army. These persons had been commanded *to go to the city where Elisha was*; the prophet therefore told them no falsehood when he said, *this is not the way, neither is this the city*, for he was not in Dothan at that time; and it is plain he had no evil design against them, because he saved their lives when he led them to Samaria, for the king of Israel would have condemned them to death.

Ver. 24 to the end. Observe, in this account of the dreadful famine in Samaria, the judgments of God upon that city, and the accomplishment of the curses which Moses had denounced against the Israelites, *Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii.* Though Jehoram put on sackcloth, as a mark of humiliation, he did not endeavour to gain the favour of the LORD by repentance and promises of amendment, neither did he destroy the idols which were in the land; on the contrary, he regarded the *prophet of the LORD*, who had been the instrument of deliverance from the Syrians, as the public enemy, and would have cut him off had not the LORD apprized Elisha of his danger. Thus it usually is with the wicked, they are ungrateful in prosperity, and harden themselves under those troubles which ought to bring them to a sense of their duty.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe the prophecy at the beginning of this chapter, and the disbelief of it expressed by one of the nobles; and by what wonderful means four men, who were cast out of society on account of the loathsome disease which afflicted them, were made messengers of good tidings to their countrymen. Also, the exact fulfilment of Elisha's prediction, and the fate of the proud nobleman who disbelieved the word of the LORD. Thus was Samaria delivered from two dreadful evils, war and

famine, in one day; by which we see that God has always in readiness sure instruments for fulfilling his promises. Wicked men often call in question what God has revealed in the Scripture, as the nobleman did the word of the prophet, because they see difficulties in the way; but those who will not believe God's word, will hereafter experience the truth of his threatenings against wicked men and unbelievers.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. What is here related proves that all future things are known to God, and that his providence orders all events. Observe, that it was certainly providential, and not by chance, that the Shunamite should be made acquainted by the prophet beforehand with the approaches of famine, and that she should afterwards go to the king of Israel just as Elisha was telling him of the miracle by which her son was restored to life. If we mark the circumstances of our own lives, and what we know of other people's, we may very often as clearly trace the hand of Providence, though not in a miraculous way.

Ver. 7 to 16. The honour and respect paid by Benhadad to Elisha, shows that he was convinced his late defeat was an act of almighty power, and that his illness was another judgment inflicted by the God of Israel. Observe, in the behaviour of this proud king at this time, the use of affliction to bring people to a proper sense of their duty, and make them turn to God. Hazael is supposed to have succeeded Naaman as general of the Syrian army; he was the person whom Elisha was commanded to anoint king of Syria, *1 Kings, chap. xix.* but it seems he was not to be king till after Benhadad's death. Elisha's behaviour to Hazael, shows that he knew by divine inspiration that Hazael would not have patience to wait till the king of Syria should die a natural death, but would take advantage of his present illness to put an end to his life: it was known to the LORD that he certainly would do so: and as the LORD also knew that the Syrians would, by their idolatries, provoke him to punish them severely, he fixed upon Hazael as a proper instrument to execute his vengeance; but you must not suppose that

that the LORD made him wicked; on the contrary, God gave him timely warning by his prophet not to commit the *first act of cruelty*, which led to all the rest. Hazael's conduct shows that he was resolved to be king of Syria immediately at all events; and his history should teach us to be very careful not to use any unlawful means to raise ourselves in the world, and not to give way to any evil inclination, as it is impossible to know what it may in the end lead us to.

Ver. 16 to 25. Jehoram began to reign in his father's life time, and we find that he was drawn into idolatry by marrying into the family of Ahab. Observe, that this instance shows how dangerous it is to form family connections with wicked people. Athaliah was grand-daughter to Omri.

Ver. 25 to the end. Observe, that Ahaziah was a wicked king also; for his mother brought him up from his infancy in idolatry, but his reign was short and his death miserable.

CHAPTER IX.

The time was now come when the LORD intended to execute his threatened judgments upon the house of Ahab. Jehu was a man of a violent temper, a fit instrument for such a purpose, therefore he was ordained to perform it; and he received an express command to cut off all who remained of Ahab's race. Observe, how every circumstance showed that their destruction was the work of God, for Jehu was made king without his seeking it. Joram was slain and thrown into that very field which his father had taken from Naboth, in consequence of Jehu's recollecting at the instant what the LORD had threatened Ahab by the mouth of the prophet Elijah, *1 Kings, chap. xxi. ver. 29*, and Jezebel, that abominable queen, who had done so much wickedness, was eaten by dogs; and Ahaziah, king of Judah, who formed an alliance with the house of Ahab, was cut off with them, because he imitated the kings of Israel in their idolatry and wickedness. This chapter shows that the curse of God pursues wicked families, that the divine threatenings are never in vain, and that those who become the companions and followers of the wicked are sooner or later sharers in their punishment.

But should they escape temporal punishment they will certainly be condemned to suffer in the world to come.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 15. The whole house of Ahab were confirmed idolaters. The LORD had employed various means to convert them, but they hardened their hearts as their numbers increased, and if they had been suffered to live they would have corrupted many who were warned by their miserable fate to continue to fear and worship the true God. Ahaziah's children were suffered to perish with them for the same reason. Jehu's first letter to the governors of the young princes was certainly written in derision, for he knew they would not venture to set up one of these as king; neither did they dare to disobey the command in his second, because they knew he would cut them off if they did so.

Ver. 15 to the end. Jehu did right in putting the worshippers of Baal to death, but he was to blame in drawing them together by a lie, and he afterwards showed that his pretended zeal for the honour of God was not sincere, because he still kept up the idols of Jeroboam, the golden calves, which had given such great offence to God; however, as he had executed the purpose for which he had been raised to the kingdom, he was permitted to keep it, and his family to reign for four generations. If the people of Israel had kept themselves from idolatry, this violent man would never have been suffered to have ruled over them; but he was chastised by means of Hazael king of Syria. Thus one bad person or nation is made the scourge of another. The *Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel*, mentioned in *ver. 34*, is lost.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 17. It was a very unnatural action in Athaliah to destroy all her own grandchildren, but those who worshipped *idols* were guilty of such crimes as no worshipper of the true God was ever known to commit. This wicked woman was however disappointed of her end, which was to get the kingdom

kingdom of Judah for herself. The LORD would not suffer her to destroy all the royal family, because he had promised David that *there should not want a man to set upon his throne for ever*, and because he had ordained that the MESSIAH should be of David's race, and Joash was the only one of the royal race that was left. Athaliah was therefore suffered to reign no longer than till the young prince had passed the first years of his infancy, when she met with the fate she justly deserved.

Ver. 17 to the end. Jehoiada proved himself to be a faithful high priest, by the covenant he required of the king and the people.

CHAPTER XII.

Observe, that king Jehoash for a considerable time gave proofs of his piety and zeal in the service of GOD and the interests of religion; but we find, in another part of Scripture, that though he began so well he ended badly. 2 *Chron. chap. xxiii.*

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe, that Jehoahaz, king of Israel, and his people, as well as Jehoash, king of Judah, and his people, were delivered into the hands of Hazael king of Syria, and for the same crime, namely, idolatry.

Ver. 14 to 22. Observe, that God had compassion upon the Israelites, and gave them advantages over the Syrians on account of the covenant he had made with their fathers. It was to try the faith of Joash that Elisha directed him to strike the ground with the arrow. By striking it so faintly the king showed that he did not place much confidence in the promise of the LORD delivered to him by the prophet. We must not suppose there was any particular virtue in Elisha's bones to restore the dead to life. In respect to their nature the prophets were like other men, both in soul and body; the difference betwixt them and their fellow-creatures was, that they were occasionally inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, that when the LORD saw fit

to show compassion to the people of Israel, Hazael, who had been suffered to vanquish them, was cut off; and that Jehoash gained victories over the Syrians according to the strokes he had given with the arrow which the prophet delivered into his hands as the arrow of the LORD's deliverance, which showed that all events are under the LORD's government. Elisha was a very great prophet, and the king of Israel had reason to say, as Elisha had himself said when Elijah was taken from him, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horses thereof*; for he was better to them than an host of warriors.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 27. Amaziah appears to have worshipped the LORD from fear only, not from true piety and zeal for religion; but he acted according to the law of GOD in punishing the murderers of his father.

Ver. 21 to 23. Azariah, the son of Amaziah, did not succeed to the throne till eleven years after the death of his father; there was no king on the throne during that period.

Ver. 23 to the end. This king is commonly called Jeroboam the *second*. It appears, from *ver. 25*, that the prophet Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh, prophesied at this time in the ten tribes, and that he was sent to Jeroboam to promise him victory over the enemies of Israel. The kingdom was then in a very low state, and it would have been utterly ruined, had not GOD in his mercy and goodness delivered the people for the sake of the covenant made with their forefathers. The prophet Amos also prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as appears from *Amos, chap. i*.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Azariah is called Uzziah in the 26th chapter of the first book of *Chronicles*, where there is a fuller account of his reign. He was struck with leprosy for presuming to burn incense in the temple of the LORD.

Ver. 8 to 13. Zechariah was the last king of Jehu's race,
which

which was put an end to in the *fourth generation* as the LORD threatened, *chap. x. ver. 30*. Observe, that this was the fourth family of the kings of Israel which were destroyed for their idolatry; first, the family of Jeroboam, next Baasha's, afterwards Ahab's, then Jehu's, while the family of the kings of Judah, descending from David, continued to reign in regular succession.

Ver. 13 to the end. The kingdom of Israel was now in a dreadful state, one violent man after another got possession of it, but kept it a very short time. Observe, that, in the reign of Menahem, the Assyrian power, which was the instrument chosen by the LORD for the punishment of Israel, began to prevail against them. In the reign of Pekah, the Assyrians gained greater advantages. Every one of the kings mentioned in this chapter were wicked idolaters. The prophet Hosea prophesied in the reign of these kings.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 5. In Ahaz, king of Judah, we have another instance of a wicked son of a pious father; how he came to be such an idolater we are not told, but it appears that he practised all the abominations of the heathens, and sacrificed his son to Moloch, which is the meaning of his *making his son pass through the fire, ver. 3*. Moloch was a brazen statue, an idol of the Ammonites; it was in the form of a man, but with the head of a calf, wearing a regal crown. Moloch was seated upon a throne with his arms stretched out to receive the children who were offered to him, and from thence they fell into a furnace which was under him, and were burnt to death, whilst those who attended this horrid sacrifice made a great noise with drums, trumpets, and other instruments to drown their cries.

Ver. 5 to the end. It was not the will of the LORD that Jerusalem should be destroyed at this time, and we read in the prophecy of *Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 1 to 10*, that this prophet was sent to assure Ahaz and his people that they should not prevail against it, neither were the kings of Assyria and Israel suffered to destroy the holy city; but as they continued their abominable practices, their enemies were permitted to prevail against

against them in other parts of Israel, as we read in the *second Book of Chronicles*. It was after this that Ahaz purchased the alliance of the king of Assyria, with the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser. Nothing could be more impious than his placing an heathen altar in the house of the LORD, and presuming to make the alterations which are mentioned, in the temple service. In short, every thing showed that Ahaz was a very wicked man, and entirely given up to idolatry. There is a further account of this king in the *28th chapter of the second Book of Chronicles*.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 7. As Hoshea had engaged to 'pay a tribute to the king of Assyria, he ought to have done it faithfully. It appears, from the book of *Isaiah, chap. xxx.* that this prophet was inspired to warn the king and people of Israel not to seek help from the king of Egypt; but Hoshea did so, notwithstanding; and the LORD's threatening was fulfilled, and the kingdom of Israel was entirely ruined.

Ver. 7 to the end. These verses show the crimes for which the people of Israel were given up as a prey to their enemies, but not till after the LORD had frequently admonished them by his prophets to return from their idolatries and other crimes, and serve him with a faithful heart. God's dealings with the Israelites show that though he is merciful and long suffering, he will at length execute his threatenings upon those who slight his goodness. God drove the Israelites out of their country, to show that the Divine covenant should not be always confined to their nation, and also by their means to spread some knowledge of his religion among the heathens, that they might afterwards be prepared to receive the gospel. Lions were sent against the new inhabitants to make them sensible of the power of God, and to prevent the knowledge of his divine majesty from being totally lost in the land.

Observe, that the mixed people who inhabited the land of Israel were called Samaritans; they learnt of a captive priest to worship the LORD, but they did not worship the LORD *only*, they still kept to their idols, and reckoned the true
 God

GOD as one of them, which was dishonouring them. Remember that the great CREATOR, who is the ONLY GOD, must have the whole heart; a divided affection is an offence to his divine majesty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Ahaz, king of Judah, had greatly increased idolatry in the land of Judah; his son Hezekiah endeavoured to root it out. It appears from the *4th verse*, that the people of Judah had made an idol of the brazen serpent, which Moses, by the commandment of the LORD, set up for a very different purpose in the wilderness; Hezekiah therefore did very right in destroying it. Observe, in the *5th and 6th verses*, on what account the LORD blessed him.

Ver. 9 to 17. We here learn that Hezekiah reigned at the same time with Hoshea king of Israel. The *12th verse* shows for what reason the LORD suffered the Assyrians to carry the people of Israel into captivity.

The sum Senacherib demanded amounted to three hundred and fifty thousand pounds of our money. This Hezekiah could not pay without taking some of the treasures devoted to the LORD, and even stripping the temple of some of its ornaments. But this would not satisfy the proud king of Assyria, he resolved to continue the war, which ended in his own destruction.

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe, that the generals of the king of Assyria in their proud and impious speeches openly insulted the LORD GOD, by comparing him to the idols of the heathens, and defying his Almighty power. From *ver. 25*, it seems that they had heard of Isaiah's prophecies, but they did not understand from them that the Assyrian power, and the *great king*, as they called him, who was then at the head of it, were no more than the instruments of GOD's vengeance against Israel and Judah for their idolatries and other crimes, and that having done GOD's work against his rebellious people they would in their turn be punished for their wicked deeds. See *Isaiah, chap. x.* Rabshakeh knew that the common people might be easily deceived by fair speeches, therefore he chose to direct his discourse to them; but remember that those persons

persons are always to be suspected who endeavour to set the people against their king and governors. The people of Judah were too wise at this time to be taken in by Rabshakeh's promises; they believed in the LORD, and knew they had a *good king*, and would not be drawn aside from their duty though such dangers threatened them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 14. The good king Hezekiah was afflicted at the insults which had been offered to GOD, and he knew that it was not in his power either to maintain the honour of the LORD, or to deliver his people from the danger which threatened them; therefore he humbled himself, and sent to the prophet that he might know what he ought to do on such a trying occasion. Observe, the message which the prophet delivered from the LORD, which was a very remarkable prophecy, and it was soon fulfilled.

Ver. 14 to 35. Observe, that Hezekiah considered the impious and insulting letter of Senacherib as an open defiance of the LORD; his behaviour on the receipt of it was very proper. The prophet's message from Isaiah must be considered as the words of GOD himself, speaking by his prophet. By *the virgin, the daughter of Zion, ver. 21*, was meant the city of Jerusalem, which the Assyrians were at that time besieging, and which Senacherib had threatened to destroy. *Ver. 25* alludes to the prophecies which had formerly been delivered concerning the Assyrian power as the instrument of the LORD's vengeance. *Ver. 29 to 35*, contain prophetic promises to the king and people of Judah.

Ver. 35 to the end. This was one of the most astonishing events that was ever known in the world. The miraculous destruction of the Assyrian host served at once to reward Hezekiah for putting his trust in the LORD, to punish the heathen for their presumption, and to prove to the world that the LORD alone is GOD. In this chapter we see a very remarkable instance of GOD's making all things work together for good to those who love him and keep his commandments,

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 8. The sickness of Hezekiah was of a mortal nature, no human art could cure it: and Isaiah was sent to inform him that it was so. The advice which the prophet gave him is such as every body should follow, both in respect to their worldly, and spiritual concerns, for great confusion often happens from people not settling their affairs before they die; and dreadful are the consequences of not taking care of the soul before it leaves the body to enter on that state which is to last for ever! From Isaiah's ordering a fig to be applied to the part affected, we may learn that medicines become effectual through the blessing of the LORD.

Ver. 8 to 12. Hezekiah having before received a message of death, scarcely believed the prophet that his life would be spared, therefore he begged for a sign, which was given to strengthen his faith, and to convince him that his recovery was an act of Divine goodness. The sign was a very wonderful one, but nothing is too great for the power of God to bring to pass.

Ver. 12 to the end. Hezekiah on this occasion was forgetful of his duty, and gloried in the riches of his kingdom as if he had gained them by his own power. Babylon was at this time a city of no great note. It must have been a great grief to Hezekiah to hear that his posterity would be carried into captivity, but he comforted himself with the thought that the evil day was yet at a distance; and he trusted in God that he would protect and bless all those whose hearts were faithful, wherever he might see fit to place them. In the days of Hezekiah, lived the prophet Micah, whose prophecies related to both Israel and Judah.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 10. Manasseh was probably badly instructed during his minority; he appears to have set up idols of all descriptions in the kingdom of Judah, and he carried his impiety beyond that of any of the former kings, by placing a
graven

graven image in that very temple which Solomon had dedicated with so much solemnity to the worship of God, and which the GLORY OF THE LORD had filled.

Ver. 10 to 19. Some of the prophecies here alluded to are in the book of Isaiah. In the 33d chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, we have an account of Manasseh's repentance, and restoration to his kingdom.

Ver. 19 to the end. Amon was very wicked in returning to idolatry after the punishment which had been inflicted upon his father; it is said, in the 33d chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, that he humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done, but trespassed more and more. It was not through zeal for the honour of the LORD that the people slew the murderers of Amon, for they were as much addicted to idolatry as their sovereign.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 14. Josiah was very young when he came to the throne; but he appears, by his early piety, to have had very good instruction. Observe, that no sooner did Josiah show his zeal, than the LORD rewarded him in a very remarkable manner, by bringing to light the *book of the law* to instruct him in his duty, and which had been hidden while the people had been given up to idolatry. This *book of the law* is supposed to have been that which was written by Moses. It appears to have been by the particular direction of Providence that Shaphan the scribe opened the book at the part which denounced curses against the king and people of Israel for a neglect of the law.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, that the message delivered by the prophets was a very dreadful one, as it related to the kingdom of Judah, but comfortable to Josiah himself. We may learn from it that when the wickedness of a nation is at the height, neither the endeavours nor the prayers of the righteous can prevent the judgments of God from taking their course. It also teaches us that God sometimes shortens the lives of those he most loves, to save them from the evil he designs to bring upon the wicked.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, that Josiah resolved to do all in his power towards restoring the true religion, and rooting out idolatry. From the account of his proceedings, it appears that the land of Judah was filled with idols from one end of it to the other.

Ver. 15 to 21. Observe, here, that Josiah, without knowing of it beforehand, fulfilled the prophecy *spoken 350 years* before by the prophet, who was sent to reprove Jeroboam for setting up the golden calf at Bethel. See *1st Kings, chap. xiii.* and that he was greatly astonished when this prophecy was shewn to him.

Ver. 21 to 26. While idolatry was practised, the ordinances of the LORD were slighted, the feast of the passover appears to have fallen into utter neglect. Josiah restored it, taking the law of the LORD as his guide in all things. Consider what a sad thing it is for a people to be without the written word of GOD.

Ver. 26 to 31. Manasseh had so defiled the city of Jerusalem and the temple, by bringing abominations into the sanctuary, that they were no longer holy, that is, entirely devoted to the service of GOD, and the LORD had determined to bring judgments upon the people. Observe, that though Josiah's acts were very pleasing to the LORD, he could not cleanse what his grandfather had so defiled; but the LORD withheld the threatened judgments during the reign of this good king for his sake.

Ver. 31 to the end. We read in the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, that this prophet was sent to the last kings of Judah, and amongst them to Jehoahaz, who persisted in his evil ways notwithstanding, and on this account he was delivered into the hands of the king of Egypt, who made his brother king of Judah in his stead, upon condition of receiving tribute from him, which he could not pay without taxing his subjects heavily. When Jehoiakim had reigned about three years, Nebuchadnezzar was made king of Babylon. Observe, that Jehoiakim was as wicked as his brother, and that neither he nor his people would hearken to

the word of the LORD, but, on the contrary, they treated his prophets as impostors, and would have put them to death, as we read in the book of Jeremiah.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Nebuchadnezzar having conquered Jehoiakim, obliged him to pay tribute for his kingdom. The LORD permitted Jehoiakim to be molested by the various enemies named in *ver. 2* of this chapter, on account of the wickedness of him and his people.

Ver. 8, 9. Jehoiakin, the son of Jehoiakim, was not restrained from his wickedness by the threatenings of the LORD, neither would he humble himself, and he soon found the fruits of his folly and wickedness; for we read in the *2d Book of Chronicles*, that Nebuchadnezzar put him in chains and sent him to Babylon, where he continued a miserable captive till the death of that monarch, which was thirty-six years afterwards. Thus was fulfilled the word of the LORD spoken by Moses so many years before, *the Lord shall bring against them a nation from afar, &c.* See *Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii.*

Ver. 9 to 17. Observe, that Nebuchadnezzar carried with him a great number of other captives besides Jehoiakin. He had taken some away eight years before, among whom were the prophet Daniel, and his friends, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. He now took the principal officers, that they might not raise conspiracies against him; and he took the smiths to prevent them from making arms for the people. Nebuchadnezzar had made great conquests over other nations besides Judah, and his empire was growing very great.

Ver. 17 to the end. Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah, to show his power over him.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Nebuchadnezzar had certainly great reason to be enraged with Zedekiah for his treacherous behaviour, but he was very cruel to him. But remember that these sufferings the

the king of Judah might have avoided if he would have hearkened to the admonitions of the prophets, instead of mocking the messengers of God, and despising the word of the Lord. There are two predictions concerning Zedekiah, one in *Jeremiah*, chap. xxxiv. ver. 3, and the other in *Ezekiel*, chap. xii. ver. 13, which seemed to contradict each other, but which were exactly fulfilled, for Zedekiah did *see the king of Babylon face to face*, and he was *carried to Babylon*, yet did he not *see it*, because he was deprived of his eyesight before he went thither. Observe, that Nebuzar-adan executed the commands of his sovereign with the utmost rigour, and robbing the temple of the remains of its treasures, he set fire to that noble edifice which Solomon had built with so much cost and magnificence, and which had been *the glory of the whole earth*; and remember that these misfortunes were suffered to fall upon the Jews; nay, they were expressly sent upon them, because, as the chosen people of God, who were separated from the other nations of the earth to keep up the true religion, they were unmindful of their covenant; had departed from the worship of the true God, broken his commandments, despised his holy ordinances, and given themselves up to the worship of idols, though he had wrought so many wonderful works among them, and given such repeated proofs of his kindness to them as the posterity of his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, in order to understand the history of the Israelites, you must read the prophetic writings, especially the *Book of Jeremiah*, in which the history of the reigns of the last kings of Judah are given more at large than either in the *2d Book of Kings*, or the *2d Book of Chronicles*.

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe, that Jehoiakin was kept in prison thirty-seven years from the time that Nebuchadnezzar's army first besieged Jerusalem, when he had reigned only eight years. See *2d Kings*, chap. xxiv.

FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

THE Books of Chronicles are records of what passed under the reigns of David and Solomon, and the kings of Judah who reigned after them, among which are interspersed some circumstances relating to the kings of Israel. The first book contains several genealogies, from Adam to the time of the Babylonian captivity; this is the subject of the first nine chapters. In the rest of the book we have the history of David's reign, beginning at the death of Saul. The genealogies are not without their use, they settle the antiquity as well as the truth of the Bible history, since they trace things from the beginning of the world, and from Adam the first man. They prove that, from the most early times, and afterwards, the Jews preserved among them the knowledge of what had been done from the creation. They serve to clear up many points of sacred history, and show the origin of the several people and nations of the world.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, that in this chapter, ADAM is named as the first of the human race; that NOAH descended in a direct line from ADAM, and ABRAHAM in a direct line from SHEM, the son of NOAH, and that JACOB descended in a direct line from ABRAHAM.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have the genealogies of the twelve sons of JACOB, which formed the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL; the genealogy of JUDAH is given in particular, because this
was

was the head tribe, and that from which THE MESSIAH, the promised SAVIOUR, was to proceed. This, and the two following chapters, shew that the tribe of Judah was very numerous and powerful, as the patriarch Jacob foretold it would be, when he blessed his sons upon his death-bed: *See Genesis, chap. xlix.*

CHAPTER III.

We have, in this chapter, the lineal descendants from King David, both before and after the captivity in Babylon. As the family of David was the most considerable of any in the tribe of Judah, and the SAVIOUR was to proceed from it, GOD saw fit that the genealogy of it should be preserved with great exactness. The list we read of David's descendants shows that the Jews did not lose their genealogies in the time of the Babylonish captivity, and that these books were written after their captivity.

CHAPTER IV.

All that is remarkable in this chapter is, that which is said of Jabez, *ver. 9.* There have been at all times persons distinguished for their faith and piety, and who have considered the Divine favour as the source of all happiness; and in all ages GOD has answered their prayers and poured his blessings upon them.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter contains the genealogies of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. These tribes were favoured in the days of Moses and Joshua, but falling into idolatry they were delivered into the hands of the king of Assyria; by which we learn that those who have received the greatest favours from GOD, and made an ill use of them, become at length the objects of his vengeance.

CHAPTER VI.

We have here the genealogies of the sons of Levi; these were preserved with the greatest care, because the Levites were the ministers of religion, and each family in that tribe had its peculiar functions in the divine service. These functions the Levites exercised both in the Tabernacle which Moses made, and in the Temple of Solomon. After their return from the captivity, they resumed them; but the ancient order was restored in a very imperfect manner.

CHAPTER VII.

We have, in this chapter, the descendants of the tribes of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphthali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher.

CHAPTER VIII.

We have here the names of the descendants of Benjamin, and in particular the names of the ancestors of Saul, the first king of Israel.

CHAPTER IX.

This chapter contains the names of the head of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who dwelt at Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity; also, the names of the priests and Levites, and of the several offices in which they were employed, and a repetition of the genealogy of king Saul. We find, by this chapter, that as soon as the captivity at Babylon was at an end, and the Jews were permitted to go to their own land, there were many who returned, and showed their zeal by restoring divine worship, as much as their circumstances would admit of, to the order prescribed by

by the law, and according to the regulations made by the prophet Samuel, and king David.

CHAPTER X.

Observe, that this chapter gives the same account of the death of Saul as we have in the *31st chapter of the 1st Book of Samuel*, with these farther circumstances, that the Philistines fastened his head in the temple of Dagon their chief idol, and that he died for *disobeying the word of the LORD*, and for *consulting one that had a familiar spirit*; from whence we may learn that it is a great offence, in the sight of GOD, to consult conjurers and fortune-tellers, or any persons who pretend to foretell future events.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 10. These verses agree with part of the *5th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*.

Ver. 10 to the end. We have here the names of David's mighty men, and an account of some of their famous exploits. We should particularly remark *ver. 15 to 20*, the action of three officers who went to draw water for David, and his choosing rather to pour it on the ground as an offering to the LORD, than to quench his thirst with what they had obtained at the hazard of their lives. This circumstance is related also in the *23d chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 23. In these verses we have the names of those who joined David when he was at Ziklag. See *1st Samuel, chap. xxvii.* which shows the care which GOD took of David in giving him an army to secure the kingdom after Saul's death, amongst which were even some of Saul's relations. The words of Amasai, *ver. 18*, which were *prophetic*, must have been very comfortable to David at that time.

Ver. 23 to the end. We have here the names of the principal

principal officers who went to David with large companies to make him king at Hebron, as is related in the *5th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*. We may perceive in this part of David's history how the providence of GOD orders all events to bring about his design, and to reward those who are faithful to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

This chapter agrees with the *6th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*, but we have here, *ver. 2 to 6*, the consultation which David held with his people concerning bringing back the Ark.

CHAPTER XIV.

This chapter is nearly the same with part of the *5th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter should be read after the latter part of the *6th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*, for one contains circumstances which are not in the other. We have here a particular account of the care which David took to remove the Ark according to the commands of GOD, and of the solemn music which was performed on the occasion, with the names of some of the musicians.

CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter agrees in part with the *6th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel*, and partly with the *105th Psalm*.

Ver. 1 to 7. We have here an account of the care which David took to establish public worship at Jerusalem, in a manner suitable to the majesty of GOD.

Ver. 7 to the end. Observe, that king David's thanksgiving was admirably suited to the Israelites at the time it was appointed to be sung before the Ark; and it is in many respects
suitable

uitable to the public worship of Christians, as you will find if you read it with attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

This chapter is almost word for word the same with the *7th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter agrees with the *8th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel.*

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter agrees with the *10th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel.*

CHAPTER XX.

This chapter also agrees with the *10th chapter of the 2d Book of Samuel.*

Ver. 1 to 4. Learned authors suppose that David did not, as it is here translated, cut his captives to pieces with saws and harrows of iron, nor make them pass through the brick kilns, but that he set them to laborious employments, making them work *with* those instruments, and *at* the brick-kilns, which is more agreeable to his character, for he was far from being a cruel man.

Ver. 4 to the end. Observe, that these were reckoned men of extraordinary large stature at that time ; and of the same race with Goliath, whom David slew in his youth.

CHAPTER XXI.

This chapter is nearly the same as the 24th chapter of the 2^d Book of Samuel, only it is here said, *ver. 1*, that it was through the temptation of Satan that David was led into the sin he committed in numbering the people of Israel. *Ver. 25*, Ornan is the same person who, in the 24th chapter of the 2^d Book of Samuel, is called Araunah.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, here, that as soon as the place was fixed upon for the *house of the LORD*, David began to make preparations for the building it, that every thing might be in readiness against Solomon his son came to the throne.

Ver. 6 to 11. Compare these verses with the 2^d Book of Samuel, chap. vii. *ver. 2*.

Ver. 11 to 14. David's charge to Solomon points out the great advantage of a religious life, and gives an example to parents to recommend piety, and the keeping of God's commandments, as the whole happiness of families; and indeed where these are not, families are always unhappy, though in possession of the greatest wealth.

Ver. 14 to the end. It was great encouragement to Solomon to find his father had already collected such stores of materials for the building of the temple; but as he would want the assistance of the princes and nobles in the accomplishment of that great work, David exhorted them to be zealous for the worship of God, and to take advantage of the peace which at that time prevailed in the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Till this time it had been the office of the Levites to carry the tabernacle, and all the vessels belonging to it, from place to place; but this office was to cease when the temple was built, and other employments were then assigned to the
Levites;

Levites; the greater part of them were appointed to serve under the priests, but they were not to serve all at once but in their turns, as they were divided into courses. From *chapter xxviii. ver. 11*, we learn that David had commandments and instructions from the LORD concerning the temple and its service.

CHAPTER XXIV.

This chapter contains a list of the priests who descended from Aaron by his two sons Eleazar and Ithamar. They were divided into twenty-four classes, to serve in their order; afterwards the families of the Levites were divided into the same number of classes, to be joined with the priests in the service of the temple.

CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter treats of the musicians who amounted to two hundred and ninety-eight, whose office it was to praise God in the temple with singing and with sacred instruments of music; these likewise were divided into twenty-four classes, so that there were always twelve singers officiating.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter particularly describes the division and offices of those Levites who were *porters and keepers of the temple*; these served by turns as the others did, and were placed at the four avenues of the temple, and part of these Levites were to keep the sacred treasures. We find, from this and the foregoing chapters, that David in his great zeal settled every thing relating to religion and the service of God, in a beautiful order, so that every thing might be performed in a proper manner and agreeably to the Divine will; in all which he followed the commandments and instructions which he had received from the LORD himself. See *chap xxviii. ver. 12—19*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter contains the number and courses of the military and civil officers. It appears that David had in his service two hundred and fourscore and eight thousand men, who were divided into twelve regiments of twenty-four thousand men, and who served each in their month; by which regulation both officers and men were at liberty to attend to their domestic affairs eleven months in each year. This chapter gives us likewise the names and posts of the heads of the twelve tribes. Thus David, like the father of his country, provided for the security and happiness of his people before he left the world.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. David thought proper before his death to inform the heads of the people that, by the LORD's appointment, Solomon was to reign after him.

Ver. 9 to 11. David's advice to Solomon is such as every parent should give to his children, and which every son and daughter should follow.

Ver. 11 to 20. It appears from *ver. 12*, that David in his directions concerning the temple acted according to the revelations he had received from the LORD himself. When the tabernacle was made, *the pattern of it, and of every thing relating to it*, were shown to Moses in the mount; in like manner *the plan of the temple, and the form of every thing belonging to it*, was shown to David. From the account here given of his gifts for the temple, we learn that David had been collecting treasures for this sacred purpose from the time he came to the throne.

David's zeal should animate every one, according to his station and abilities, to promote the service and worship of GOD. The Christian religion does not require such great expence for places of public worship as were necessary for the works of the temple; but there are sometimes churches or chapels to be built, to which all should contribute who can afford

afford it; and there are in all Christian countries places of worship to keep in repair, and ministers to maintain, for which purposes rates are provided, those should be paid with cheerfulness by those of whom they are demanded, as an offering of thankfulness to God, for allowing such sinful creatures as mankind to build houses to his name. If we do this, we may expect God to do with us according to the words of David in *ver. 20*, which he certainly spake by divine inspiration.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1 to 10. From *ver. 1* we learn to consider a place of public worship as an *earthly palace for the ALMIGHTY KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS*; which should teach us to behave with great reverence in it. Observe, that king David's pious example was followed by all the heads of the people, which was a source of great joy to him and to them also. Next to the doing good one's self, is the delight of exciting others to good actions, and whatever is done with a sincere desire to promote the honour of God and the happiness of mankind carries its reward with it.

Ver. 10 to 20. David's thanksgiving shows what exalted delight his heart felt upon this occasion. The first *verse* of this thanksgiving is nearly in the words of the Doxology to the LORD'S PRAYER, and shows that David was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT while he spake it.

Ver. 20 to the end. It was a great satisfaction to David to see his son Solomon seated on the throne with the full consent of all the principal men of the kingdom, by which the promises of God were fulfilled that David's son should reign after him.

The Book of Samuel the seer, or prophet, is still in being, but that of Nathan the prophet is lost to the world.

SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

THIS book contains the history of the kings that reigned in Jerufalem, from Solomon, the fon of David, to the Babylonish captivity, and fome accounts of the kings of Ifrael.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 13. These verses agree with the former part of the 3d chapter of the 1st Book of Kings, in which there are some circumstances which are not mentioned by the writer of this book.

Ver. 13 to the end. These verses agree with part of the 4th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter agrees with the 5th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings, but there are some particulars here which are not mentioned by the writer of that book.

Huram is the same king who is called Hiram in that book. Solomon is here said to have desired a *cunning workman*, meaning a *skilful artist*, from Tyre, as well as *timber*. This chapter contains Hiram's, or Huram's, letter to king Solomon.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter agrees with the 6th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings, but there is a circumstance mentioned here, *ver. 1*, which is not in that chapter, namely, that the temple was built upon the very spot David had purchased and dedicated to this holy purpose, when the LORD appeared to him at the thrashing

thrashing floor of Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite. This was also the very spot where Abraham offered up his son Isaac. See *Genesis, chap. xxii. ver. 2.*

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter agrees with the 7th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings.

CHAPTERS V. VI.

These chapters agree with the 8th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings; but in *chap. vi. ver. 13*, there is mention made of a *brazen scaffold* which Solomon had raised, in order that he might be seen while he offered the prayer of dedication.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter agrees with the 9th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings.

CHAPTERS VIII. IX.

These chapters are nearly the same as the 9th and 10th chapters of the 1st Book of Kings.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter agrees with part of the 12th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter agrees with the latter part of the 12th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings, but with additional circumstances.

We have here an account of many fenced cities which Rehoboam built, in order to defend the remains of his kingdom from Jeroboam.

Ver. 13 to 18. It appears from these verses that the priests and Levites, and a considerable number of the Israelites of different tribes, left the places in which they were settled, because they would not live in a country where idolatry was publicly practised. This should have engaged Rehoboam to continue the exercise of the true religion ; but we find that he followed the example of his father in the crimes of his last years, and acted contrary to the *law of God*. Rehoboam was a very foolish prince, but he acted wisely in separating the sons of his different wives, for there would have been sad contentions amongst them had they lived near to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter agrees with the latter part of the *14th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings*, but it contains a more particular account of Rehoboam than is given in that chapter.

Ver. 3. We have here an account of the powerful army of Shishak king of Egypt.

Ver. 5 to the end. It appears from these verses that the king and princes of Judah had some sense of duty remaining, for they humbled themselves on the LORD's sending a prophet ; and, on account of their humiliation, the LORD delivered Jerusalem from the judgments he would otherwise have brought upon them for their sins. This is one very remarkable instance, among others, that may be found in the bible, of the LORD's sparing a people when they humble themselves before him, and deprecate his wrath.

CHAPTER XIII.

This chapter agrees with part of the *15th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings*, but we have here a fuller account of the reign of Abijah, who is there called Abijam.

Ver. 4 to 13. These verses give a particular account of Abijah's behaviour when there was war betwixt him and Jeroboam,

Jeroboam, king of Israel. The speech which Abijah made upon mount Zemeraim, showed that he was not ignorant of his duty ; but with all his boasting he was himself an idolater, though not after the same manner with Jeroboam. Observe, that wicked men often pretend great zeal for the honour of GOD and religion to serve their own purposes.

Ver. 13 to the end. In the beginning of Jeroboam's reign the people of Judah were commanded not to make war upon those of the kingdom of Israel. Observe, that at this time they were allowed to do so, because the Israelites were now become idolaters, and the LORD gave victory to the people of Judah for the reason given in *ver. 18*. GOD saw fit by this means to humble and punish Jeroboam and his subjects, and to convince them and the people of Judah that idolatry is hateful in his sight, and that the true worship and covenant was to be found only in the kingdom of Judah. Observe, that the success which GOD gave Abijah was for the glory of his own great name, and for the good of his faithful people,

CHAPTER XIV.

Observe, that Asa gave a signal proof of his piety and zeal for the honour of GOD, by destroying the altars of the idols which had been introduced into the kingdom in the reign of Solomon, and continued under the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah ; and that GOD blessed him, and strengthened him in his kingdom, and gave him rest and peace. He was indeed attacked by the Ethiopians, but, calling upon the LORD, he was soon delivered. Thus GOD usually protects and blesses all who trust in him and serve him truly.

CHAPTER XV.

Observe, that the LORD gave farther encouragement to the king and people of Judah to follow him alone and forsake idols, by sending a prophet with gracious promises of protection, on which Asa required all his people to renew their covenant with GOD by a solemn oath, and even deprived his mother of all authority, because she was an idolatress.

trefs. By *the heart of Aſa being perfect all his days*, is meant only, that he always kept to the ſervice of the true God, and never fell into idolatry; for in ſome reſpects he ſinned greatly.

CHAPTER XVI.

Obſerve, that Aſa acted very improperly in making a league with the king of Syria, inſtead of truſting to the promiſes of God; and his behaviour to the prophet Hanani alſo ſhowed that his zeal for religion was greatly abated ſince the time Odiel was ſent to him. He likewiſe offended the LORD by placing his truſt in the ſkill of his phyſicians inſtead of praying God to bleſs the means uſed for his recovery. This change in Aſa ſhows, that beginning well will not ſecure the favour of God for the whole of our lives; we muſt keep on in a courſe of piety to the end of our days if we hope for the Divine bleſſing to attend us to the laſt.

CHAPTER XVII.

Obſerve, that Jehoſhaphat was a very pious good prince, remarkably zealous for the honour of God; and that the LORD bleſſed him with proſperity and made his enemies afraid to attack him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

We have an account, in the *3d chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, ver. 18*, of the affinity mentioned, in the *1ſt verſe of this chapter*, which was made betwixt Jehoſhaphat and Ahab. Jehoſhaphat ſhould not have formed an alliance with Ahab; but it was an error in judgment, not a preſumptuous ſin. This chapter is nearly the ſame as the *22d chapter of the 1ſt Book of Kings*.

CHAPTER XIX.

Jehoshaphat certainly had not reflected upon the sin and danger of making an alliance with an idolatrous king. Observe, that as soon as the prophet convinced him of it, he tried to repair his fault by promoting religion and justice in his kingdom, which showed that he had a good heart.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 14. Jehoshaphat's behaviour when he heard that his enemies were coming against him, proves that he really feared the LORD, and put his whole trust in him. The prayer which he offered up in the house of the LORD, when the people were assembled together, men, women, and children, to keep a fast, shows that he believed in the promises of God, and trusted in them.

Ver. 14 to 27. Observe, that Jehoshaphat and his people soon found the benefit of their humiliation, for the LORD sent his prophet to comfort and encourage them by a divine promise, which was soon fulfilled.

Ver. 27 to 35. Observe, that after the miraculous defeat of their enemies Jehoshaphat, and his people offered a public thanksgiving. In the beginning of his reign this good king began to take away the *high places* devoted to idol worship; but it appears from the *33d verse of this chapter*, that his people made such an opposition to him that he could not fully accomplish his purpose.

Ver. 35 to the end. As Jehoshaphat's son was married to Ahab's daughter, Jehoshaphat probably wished to keep up friendship with his family; as king of Judah he should have done only what he knew would please the LORD without regard to relations of any kind. Observe, that he was soon punished for this fault by the loss of his ships.

It is very plain from this chapter that public fasts and thanksgivings, such as are appointed in Christian countries on particular occasions, are pleasing to the LORD. We also learn from the history of Jehoshaphat that when good people form

intimate friendships and connections with the wicked, they bring misfortunes on themselves.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 12. The son of the good Jehoshaphat was very unlike his father, but this is accounted for in the *6th verse*, where it is remarked that he had married the daughter of Ahab king of Israel. Observe, that though Jehoram provoked the LORD by his idolatries, yet the LORD spared him for the sake of his covenant with David, but Jehoram was punished by the revolt of some of his subjects.

Ver. 12 to the end. The writing, or letter, from Elijah, might be one which that prophet had written in his lifetime by the spirit of prophecy. Observe, that Jehoram had a very unquiet reign, and must have suffered greatly from the bodily disease with which he was afflicted; especially when he knew for a certainty that it was a visitation from the LORD for his wickedness. Observe, that he was despised by his people, that after his death they would not pay the usual funeral honours to his remains. All this shows that there is a particular curse attending wicked princes, and that their end is unhappy and their memory odious.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 10. There is the same account of the preservation of Joash in the *11th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*, but he is there called Jehoash. Observe, that it was by a very extraordinary act of Providence that Joash was preserved when all the rest of the royal family were destroyed. Thus God always brings about his own purposes in spite of all the wicked do to defeat them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter is almost exactly the same as the *11th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 17. The former part of the 12th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings agrees with these verses, and it appears that Joash kept to his duty as long as this faithful friend Jehoiada lived.

Ver. 17 to 23. The great change in the conduct of Joash, after the death of Jehoiada, shows of what great consequence it is that young princes should have wise and pious counsellors. The princes who came to him afterwards with flattery were idolaters, and they, unhappily for him and his people, drew him away from the LORD; yet the LORD did not forsake him, but preserved him, on account of his being of David's race. Observe, that the suffering the prophet Zechariah, the son of that good man who had been to him as a father and more than a father, to be murdered, was an act of the greatest ingratitude in Joash, as well as cruel and presumptuous.

Ver. 23 to the end. Observe, that the LORD did not permit the wickedness of Joash to go unpunished, for he suffered the Syrians, though few in number, to get the victory; and there is no doubt but Hazael, who was king of Syria at that time, practised upon the Israelites some of those barbarities which Elisha foretold when Hazael went to consult him concerning the sickness of Benhadad, 2d Kings, chapter 8. Joash himself after being greatly afflicted with disease, died a violent death, and was buried with disgrace. All who provoke God by their wickedness experience sooner or later the severity of his judgments. There is a shorter account of the death of Joash, with the names of his servants that slew him, in the last verses of the 12th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 5. These verses agree exactly with the beginning of the 14th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings.

Ver. 5 to 14. Observe, that Amaziah found his reward in obeying the command of the LORD, who had at that time

resolved to punish the Edonites by his hand, and to show that He hath power to help or to cast down.

Ver. 14 to 17. Amaziah's bringing back from the victory heathen gods and worshipping them, showed that he had no fixed principle of religion in his heart, he was therefore easily drawn aside. His threatening to take away the life of the prophet who was sent to reprove him was a presumptuous sin.

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe, that the king of Israel had not offended Amaziah so as to provoke him to send him the haughty message he did; and on account of the wickedness of Amaziah and his people, the Israelites were suffered to ravage the kingdom of Judah, and plunder the temple at Jerusalem and the king's house, and Amaziah died miserably. These particulars are related also in the *2d Book of Kings*, chap. xiv.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe, that Uzziah began his reign well, and whilst he followed the advice of the LORD's prophet he prospered, and was victorious over the enemies of Judah; but he suffered success to lift him up.

Ver. 16 to the end. As the LORD had commanded that none but the priests should burn incense, it was a presumptuous sin in Uzziah to take the priestly office upon himself: *see Numbers, chap. xviii. and Exodus, chapter xxx. ver. 7.* From the history of this king we learn that people should have a great guard upon themselves in time of prosperity lest they forget their duty and offend GOD; and also, that it is a heinous sin to assume the priest's office. This king is called Azariah in the *15th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Jotham is reckoned among the good kings of Judah; he followed his father's example in what was right, but did not imitate his bad qualities, and he was favoured of GOD. All the kings of Israel, without exception, were idolaters; but in the kingdom of Judah there were several good kings, though

it was not in the power of these entirely to root up all idolatrous and superstitious practices; but the blessing of God was with these good kings, and made them prosper, whilst idolatrous kings were punished with wars and conspiracies, and in their families, and in many other ways.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 16. The first verses of this chapter agree with the 16th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings. The valley of Hinnom was the place where sacrifices to Moloch were offered; it is also called Tophet. Observe, that according to the prophecy of *Isaiah, chap. vii.* the kings of Syria and Israel were not suffered to succeed against Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people were delivered into their hands in other parts of Israel, on account of their continuing their abominations after being encouraged by a divine message. This was a very remarkable instance of the justice of God against this king and his subjects; but observe, that though the Lord, for the punishment of Ahab, had permitted the king of Israel to prevail, yet he blamed the Israelites for the cruelties they had exercised against their brethren, the men of Judah, and would not suffer them to keep their prisoners, and the Israelites readily restored them. This history shows that God does not approve of the cruelties usually exercised in times of war.

Ver. 16 to the end. When the prophet Isaiah went to Ahaz, as related in the 7th chapter of his prophecy, he delivered a very remarkable prophecy concerning our Saviour, and he also warned him not to seek for succours from the King of Assyria, but Ahaz would not hearken. Observe, in the 23d verse of this chapter, from what motive Ahaz sacrificed to the idols of Syria, and raised altars to them in every corner of Jerusalem. Observe also, that instead of humbling himself, the greater his distresses were, the more his impiety increased. It is a certain sign of a desperate degree of obstinacy and wickedness when the corrections of the Almighty are useless, and when men, instead of improving, grow worse and worse under affliction.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1, 2. This chapter agrees with the 18th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, but there are some circumstances mentioned here which are not in that book.

Ver. 3 to the end. Observe, here, that this good king, in order to destroy idolatry, and restore the worship of God, assembled the priests and Levites to purify the temple, by removing every thing that had been used for idolatrous purposes; and that, having purified it as much as possible from the defilement of idolatry, he gathered all the rulers and people together, and renewed the covenant with God. This pious and upright conduct secured to the nation the divine blessing to Hezekiah, and many signal deliverances were vouchsafed on account of the piety and zeal of this good king.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that the passover was the principal token of God's covenant with the Jews; Hezekiah proclaimed this feast not only throughout Judah, but in all the land of Israel. These were new proofs of his zeal for the honour of God and the good of his people.

Ver. 13 to the end. It must have been a great comfort and joy to all the faithful people, as well as to the good king himself, to see the true religion restored; but there were many who despised Hezekiah's kind and earnest invitation, and made him the subject of their scoff and raillery. Observe, that those who came out of the country of the ten tribes to Jerusalem, though they were not able in all things to comply with the divine ordinances prescribed by the law of Moses, were allowed to eat of it before the celebration of the passover. Hezekiah knew that no one should wilfully neglect the outward duties of public worship, but he was persuaded at the same time that, when they cannot possibly be performed, God favourably receives the prayers and devotion of those that seek him with sincerity; he therefore prayed God to pardon those Israelites, and the LORD graciously granted his petition.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter affords us, in good Hezekiah, an example of unwearied piety. Observe, that whatever he directed, his people executed with great zeal, so that the true religion was restored in Israel, and divine worship established according to the law of Moses. Observe, particularly, the words of the two last verses of this chapter, which prove that what men do in the service of the house of God with a sincere intention, is always acceptable in his sight; nor does he ever fail to bless those who labour with an honest heart, to promote his glory.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, here, an account of the preparations made by king Hezekiah against the threatened invasion of the king of Assyria; particularly, *ver. 7 and 8*, how he encouraged his people to put their trust in the LORD.

Ver. 9 to 24. These verses agree exactly with the history of king Hezekiah in the *19th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*, and the *37th chapter of the Book of Isaiah*.

Ver. 24 to the end. These verses agree with the *20th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*, and the *38th chapter of Isaiah*. Observe, that Hezekiah did not make so good a use of prosperity as he had done of adversity, for his mind was lifted up with the thought of his great riches, which occasioned him to be guilty of the great imprudence of displaying his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, which was productive of bad consequences. See *Isaiah, chap. xxxix*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 11. These verses agree exactly with part of the *21st chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*.

Ver. 11 to 18. Observe, here, the completion of the LORD's threatening to Hezekiah by the prophet Isaiah; see *2d Kings*,

Kings, chap. xx. ver. 17, &c. and that Manasseh deserved the punishment which was inflicted on him for his multiple idolatries and abominations, particularly for setting up an idol in the house of the LORD; but as he humbled himself he received mercy. Observe, that, after he was restored to his kingdom, he endeavoured to make atonement for his fault by his great zeal for the worship of GOD; yet the people of his kingdom could not be weaned from their idolatrous practices.

Ver. 18 to 21. Among the writings in the Apocrypha, there is one entitled *The Prayer of Manasses, King of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon*, which is supposed to be that to which these verses allude.

Ver. 21 to the end. These verses agree with the last verses of the 21st chapter of the 2d Book of Kings.

The repentance of Manasseh should be well considered, as it represents, on one hand, the necessity and advantage of affliction, and on the other, affords us an extraordinary instance of GOD's mercy to the greatest sinners when they humble themselves, and make a good use of his corrections. We should likewise attend to the behaviour of the king when he was restored to his kingdom, which was directly opposite to his former conduct. In his advanced age Manasseh corrected the faults of his early years. Remember that true repentance consists in removing and repairing as much as possible the evil we have done, and in amending our lives.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

This chapter agrees with the 22d and part of the 23d chapters of the 2d Book of Kings; but in the 3d verse we here read that Josiah gave public proofs of his piety and zeal for religion in the eighth year of his reign.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1 to 20. These verses agree with the 23d chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, but we have here a more particular account of the solemn passover which Josiah caused to be kept in Judah, which is only mentioned in the *Book of Kings*.
Though

Though Josiah knew that he should die, he abated nothing of his zeal; for as he was resolved to do his duty during his whole life, he neglected nothing that might tend to restore religion, or to appease the wrath of God, which was ready to fall upon the Jewish nation.

Ver. 20 to the end. Josiah was guilty of a fault, in rashly engaging with the king of Egypt, who on this occasion appears to have been inspired to warn him not to do so; and this proved the occasion of his death. But the time was come at which God intended to take Josiah from the world, that this good king might not have the grief of seeing the desolation He was going to bring upon Jerusalem. Good people are often taken from the evil to come. Observe, that there was great mourning for the loss of this good king, and among those who lamented his death was the prophet Jeremiah. This prophet is supposed to have written his book called *the Lamentations of Jeremiah*, on the death of this good king.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

This chapter agrees with the 23d, 24th, and 25th chapters of the 2d Book of Kings. The words of Cyrus, which he put in writing, are in the 1st chapter of Ezra; but before you proceed to the Book of Ezra you may read the Book of Jeremiah, in which the history of the Jews is carried on; also the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel, with the remarks upon them. In the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, we have a most awful instance of the just vengeance of God upon a rebellious and disobedient people. Observe, *ver. 16, 17*, what means the LORD had taken to reclaim them, and how they provoked his anger, till at last they brought his long threatened judgment upon themselves. The prediction of Jeremiah, alluded to in the 21st verse, is in the 25th chapter of Jeremiah, verse 12. It shows that the LORD did not entirely cast off his people, but preserved a remnant of them who were to continue in captivity seventy years, and then to be brought back to their own land, and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

EZRA.

CHAPTER I.

THE prophecies alluded to in the first verse, are in the 25th chapter of *Jeremiah*, ver. 12, and the 29th chapter, ver. 10. See also *Isaiah*, chap. xliv. ver. 21 to the end. Observe, that Cyrus, from his proclamation, appears to have been acquainted with these predictions, and to have regarded himself as the chosen instrument of the true GOD for restoring his people to their own land by fulfilling this prophecy. Cyrus might have had these prophecies pointed out to him by the prophet Daniel. Observe, that Cyrus sent forth his proclamation exactly at the time foretold by Jeremiah, for the return of the Jews to their own land. It was very comfortable to the Jews of the captivity to be thus encouraged by Cyrus, who, though a heathen prince, showed great respect for the GOD of the Jews, and acknowledged him to be the LORD GOD of heaven. Observe also, that, out of reverence to the LORD of the whole earth, he returned the vessels which had been taken from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter tells us the number of the Jews who returned from Babylon in consequence of the proclamation of Cyrus. Observe, that there were no more than forty-two thousand three hundred and threescore; which shows that the Jews, who were once like the stars and the sands of the sea for multitude, were greatly diminished; but many still remained in Babylon who returned afterwards at different times. It is evident from this chapter that the Jews were at this time very exact in their genealogies, and those who pretended to be of the priestly order, and could not prove their descent, were excluded from

from the priesthood. Observe, also, that notwithstanding the low estate they were in, the Jews contributed to the building the temple and restoring the worship of God.

CHAPTER III.

Observe, that it required time to collect materials and engage workmen, therefore the first year was employed in these necessary preparations; but early in the second, the foundation of the temple was laid, which was done with great solemnity. It is supposed that during the time the temple was building a tabernacle was erected as in the time of David. Observe, that when the ancient men among the Jews wept because the second temple was not likely to be equal in magnificence to that which was built by Solomon, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; they did not consider that the *glory* of a place, devoted to the worship of God, does not consist in the costliness of the building, or the pompous ceremonies performed in it, but in the presence of God. The prophet Haggai was afterwards sent to foretell that the glory of this temple should exceed that of the former one. See *Haggai, chapter ii. ver. 9.*

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 7. The adversaries of the Jews were the Samaritans, who had been placed in several cities of Israel in the room of the Israelites, whom Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, carried away captive. See *2d Book of Kings, chapter xvii. ver. 6—24 to the end.* The Samaritans, it seems, at first wished to be received by the Jews as brethren, and to join with them in the works of the temple, but the Jews refused them, because they were not the children of Israel; this provoked the Samaritans, and, by bribing some of the king's ministers to conceal the truth from Cyrus who was very old, or to make false reports, they found means to hinder the work greatly, and the disputes which began at this time gave rise to the hatred which afterwards subsisted between the Jews and

and the Samaritans. Ahasuerus was the king who succeeded Cyrus.

Ver. 7 to the end. Observe, that though the proceeding of the Samaritans was very unjust, yet the LORD permitted them to stop the building of the temple, in order perhaps to put the faith and zeal of his people to the proof; but they do not appear to have been much concerned at this hindrance of the building, and very little was done for several years; yet the Jews went on building houses for themselves as before, for which they were reproved by the prophet Haggai. See his prophecy, *chapter i.* The king Darius, mentioned in the last *verse*, was son to the king who is in this chapter called Artaxerxes.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. The prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah throw light on this part of Jewish history, and may therefore be read to advantage with the Book of Ezra; they stirred up the zeal of the people, and persuaded them to go on with the building. Palestine was the whole country which the LORD gave by covenant to Abraham for his seed, or posterity, which, on the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar, had fallen into the hands of the kings of Persia. Tatnai was governor of Palestine, under the king of Persia, as Jerusalem was in his province. Observe, that Tatnai made a very fair representation of the matter, very different from that made on a former occasion by the Samaritans.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 19. Darius in his conduct towards the Jews showed great reverence for the GOD of heaven. The publishing of his decree completed the restoration of the Jewish state, from the destruction of which, to the burning of the city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar, was exactly seventy years, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold. The prophet Zechariah prophesied in the reign of Darius, and in the name of the LORD restored the blessing to Jerusalem; *see Zechariah,*

Zechariah, chapter viii. It is observable that there were twelve he-goats offered at the dedication of the temple, from which we may understand that some of all the tribes returned to Jerusalem, though that of Judah being the most numerous, they were denominated from it, and from this time all the people began to be called Jews. The temple was twenty years building. After Darius was dead, one of his sons, named Xerxes, came to the throne, who exceeded all the kings of Persia that had been before him in power and riches, and he was puffed up with pride on account of them, and raised a prodigious army; but he was vanquished in battle, and made his escape in a small fishing-boat, leaving his army behind, which was soon after entirely destroyed; not long after, the captains of his guards conspired against him, and with the assistance of his chamberlain got into the royal apartment and murdered him while he slept in his bed. Artaxerxes, one of the sons of Xerxes, was raised to the throne. This king is, in the *Book of Esther*, called Ahasuerus. The *Book of Esther* may be read here.

After they returned to their own land, the Jews were in a much better state than they had lately been in Babylon, but very inferior to the former glory of the kingdom of Israel. The Jews had now no king, yet the sceptre remained in the tribe of Judah, for Zerubbabel, their governor, was directly descended from king David. The Temple service was restored, and they had still prophets to direct and comfort them. Observe, that in this change in the affairs of the Jews, we cannot sufficiently admire the providence of God, and the care he takes of his people. It shows that God watches over his church, and sometimes supports it even by means of idolatrous princes, and in places where it has been most persecuted.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. I to II. It is supposed that Ezra took advantage of the favourable disposition which Artaxerxes (or Ahasuerus) through the good offices of Esther and Mordecai, entertained for the Jews, and requested that those who were in his dominions might join their brethren in Judea.

Ver.

Ver. 11 to 27. Observe, here, another heathen prince expressing himself in terms of the highest reverence for the God of Israel, and contributing very largely towards the keeping up his holy worship in Jerusalem, so that the Jews by their captivity were made the instruments for spreading the knowledge of the true God in the idolatrous nations.

Ver. 27 to the end. Ezra's thanksgiving to God shows that the heart of this good minister was full of piety and zeal for the honour of God. From the first return of the Jews under the conduct of Zerubbabel, to this journey of Ezra, was about seventy years,

CHAPTER VIII.

It appears from this chapter that all the Jews did not return to Judea in the reign of Cyrus. Observe, that though Ezra had reason to expect to meet with enemies by the way, he would not ask for a band of soldiers to guard him, or his company, lest it should be thought he distrusted the divine assistance; but he implored the blessing of the Almighty with fasting and prayer. This behaviour might convince the idolatrous people among whom he lived that he had perfect confidence in the divine protection, and feared God rather than man, and his faith was rewarded by a prosperous journey. Observe, also, that Artaxerxes, and the most distinguished of his lords, sent rich presents and considerable offerings to Jerusalem. This affords a fresh proof of the particular care that Divine Providence took of the Jews,

CHAPTER IX.

It appears from this chapter that great irregularities and abominations had crept in among the Jews, and they would have been utterly ruined had not God raised up zealous persons such as Ezra the priest to reform them. Observe, the prayer which Ezra made upon this occasion, for it is very instructive as well as affecting.

CHAPTER X.

We may learn from this chapter that the people of God should never marry idolaters nor unbelievers. Before Ezra came to Jerusalem the scriptures were in a manner lost, the people were ignorant of the law, the worship of God was neglected, and every thing both in church and state in great disorder. Ezra continued in his government some years, and wrought great reformati^ons, and made it his particular endeavour to procure a correct copy of the holy scriptures, that is, of all the books then written, which he divided into three parts, the law, the prophets, and the holy writings, viz. the Psalms, &c. For this purpose he collected together all the copies of the sacred books he could meet with, that by comparing them he might correct any mistake that had been made by transcribers. Originally every book of the Hebrew bible was written without any division into chapters and verses; but it is supposed that Ezra divided the law into fifty-four sections, and that he added the last chapter to the *Book of Deuteronomy*. In the 29th year of the reign of Artaxerxes Ezra resigned the government of Judah to Nehemiah, but continued to instruct the people as an expounder of the law and a preacher of righteousness.

NEHEMIAH.

NEHEMIAH was a Jew, whose ancestors had formerly been citizens of Jerusalem, but who, having obtained a good settlement in the land of their captivity, staid there in preference to returning with their brethren.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, in this chapter, Nehemiah's great piety as well as his love for his countrymen; though he was living in a state of affluence and ease he shared their sorrows, and prayed most fervently for their deliverance.

CHAPTER II.

The queen, mentioned in *ver.* 6, is supposed to have been queen Esther; it was probably to please her that the king gave such ready consent to Nehemiah's petition. Observe, that the Samaritans, the old enemies of the Jews, joined with the neighbouring nations in oppressing them at this time; the reason of which was, that they wished to recover the places they had been compelled to deliver up to the Jews. Observe, that Nehemiah's whole behaviour proves his sincere piety, joined with great prudence and courage, and makes him a pattern for magistrates to follow. His success teaches us that God blesses the designs which are formed for good ends, and that those who labour to promote his glory should never be discouraged when they are opposed by the wicked.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter shows us how and in what order the walls of Jerusalem were built. By the extraordinary exertions that were made, the city was put into a state of defence in some degree. This should be ascribed to the piety and prudent management of Nehemiah, whose endeavours God blessed, and to the good will of the people and rulers on this occasion. Observe, that every one did what was in his power.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter affords a striking instance that God blesses the undertakings of those who trust him, especially when they have the interests of religion in view. This, Nehemiah found by happy experience, since God frustrated all the opposition of the neighbouring people, and the Jews happily finished the work they had begun.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that Nehemiah set a noble example of piety, equity, and disinterestedness, by giving up a part of his substance for the public good; and we may learn from his words to those who had oppressed their brethren, how averse we ought to be from oppression and injustice; and that, in case of necessity, we should give of our own, and even dispense with our right, for the public benefit. The faithful discharge of these duties fills the mind with great confidence, and enables a man to join in Nehemiah's fervent prayer in the 19th verse.

CHAPTER VI.

In the account Nehemiah here gives of what happened to him during his government, we may observe that good

people, especially those who labour for the glory of God, are exposed to many troubles; but that steady and pious perseverance will, by the blessing of God, overcome all difficulties, and defeat all calumnies.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe, in this chapter, the care which Nehemiah took for the security of Jerusalem. The list which he made of the Jews who returned from the captivity agrees with that in the *second chapter of Ezra*.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. The pulpit from which Ezra read the law to the people, was in the largest street in the city; probably, he fixed it in this place because the court of the temple was not large enough to contain so great a multitude. Ezra read the law in Hebrew to the Levites, who repeated it period by period to the people in the Chaldee tongue, which was usually spoken by the Jews at that time, having learnt it during the Babylonish captivity; from whence it appears that Ezra thought it agreeable to the will of God that the Scriptures should be translated for the use of the common people. Happy would it be for every nation, who have a translation of the Scriptures in their native language, would they set as high a value upon it as the Jews did at this time, and if they would read and hear it with devout attention. Yet how few, in this nation, consider the great value of the Bible in English! Not many years back the Scriptures were locked up from all but the learned, by being only in Hebrew and Greek; now they may be read and heard by the most ignorant: a blessing that cannot be too highly prized.

Ver. 9 to the end. Observe, that the hearts of the people being humbled and afflicted with godly sorrow, the Word of God made a lively impression upon them; and, as they were in a condition to relish spiritual joy, Nehemiah gave orders for the celebrating of the Feast of Tabernacles, which the people solemnized with great gladness.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe, that the prayers offered up by the Jews upon this occasion, contain a religious confession of GOD's goodness and their own wickedness. It is one of the finest prayers in the Bible.

CHAPTER X.

The manner in which the Jews renewed their covenant with GOD, should put Christians in mind of that covenant into which all of them entered at their baptism, and which many have confirmed repeatedly in the Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER; by which they have engaged to honour CHRIST as their SAVIOUR, to walk in the law of GOD, and keep his commandments all the days of their lives. Christians should also learn, from what is here related, to be zealous for divine worship, and for every thing which may be a means of rendering to GOD the honour due unto his holy name; but chiefly they should regard the inward worship of the heart, which consists in loving and fearing GOD, and in a holy life and conversation. Observe, in particular, the resolution which the Jews took, *ver.* 31, not to buy victuals on the sabbath-day. Also, *ver.* 39, their resolution never to forsake the house of God.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter contains a list of those heads of families who dwelt in Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah, and the manner in which they were settled; and it shows that what the prophets had foretold before the destruction of Jerusalem, saying, *that the city of Jerusalem should be again inhabited*, was brought to pass under the prudent and pious government of Nehemiah, by which the Jews might see the truth of GOD's promises.

CHAPTER XII.

The first part of this chapter contains the names of the priests and Levites; in the second we are told in what manner Nehemiah dedicated the walls of Jerusalem, and appointed persons to receive the oblations of the people.

CHAPTER XIII.

From this chapter we may conclude that nothing is more worthy the care of persons in a public character, than what concerns religion; and that it is a duty to provide for the maintenance of those that perform divine service, and to see that things devoted to sacred uses be properly attended to; that governors and magistrates ought to employ their authority to hinder the profanation of the LORD's day, and to oppose with vigour every thing that is contrary to the law of God, and consequently that it is the duty of all people to obey them in these instances.

What would the good Nehemiah have said had he beheld the profanation so common in Christian countries! In which many people without scruple go on parties of pleasure, others employ themselves in their counting houses, others carry on their trade by selling things in the streets, &c. all which things are profanations of the sabbath, and an open affront to the Divine Majesty, than which nothing is more likely to bring down judgments upon any nation. Surely the sabbath would not be thus profaned if people considered the obligation all are under to keep the seventh day holy, who partake of the blessings of creation, or if they had once experienced the happiness that attends the proper observation of it. *Sabbath-breaking* is always mentioned by the prophets amongst those crimes which bring ruin and destruction upon a nation. Those who slight the sabbath day throw themselves out from the protection of God, and resign themselves into the power of the devil, who will not fail to take advantage of the opportunity to tempt them on from sin to sin.

From this time the Israelites had the Scripture frequently
read

read and explained to them by the most learned among the Levites and other scribes; and afterwards tabernacles were built for the purpose, called, in the New Testament, synagogues, which multiplied in every place, like our parish churches. The service performed in them consisted of prayers, reading the Scriptures, and preaching, or expounding them. This was done two days in the week, besides on the sabbath and on festivals. The hour of prayer among the Jews, whether in the synagogues or in private houses, were at the times of offering the morning and evening sacrifices in the Temple, for they believed that the sacrifices and incense, as tokens of their faith, would make their prayers acceptable. The priests and Levites alone officiated in the Temple, but persons of any tribes were appointed, by some of the elders of the town, for the service of the synagogue, and were called *rulers of the synagogue*. Great advantages arose from the practice of reading and explaining the Scripture in the synagogues, for the Jews never returned to idolatry any more; but when they were afterwards scattered, they erected places for public worship whenever the rulers of the country would permit them. It was also by means of these synagogues that the heathens, when the Jews were dispersed, came to know the *true* GOD, and some general principles of virtue.

How long Nehemiah lived in Jerusalem after he had settled the affairs of the nation, is not mentioned in Scripture.

ESTHER.

CHAPTER I.

AHASUERUS is supposed to have been the same king who, in the Books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, is called Artaxerxes. The description of the entertainment he gave to his princes and nobles shows, that he had great riches and lived in splendour. It was very cruel of him to require queen Vashti to show herself in public, especially as it was contrary to the customs of the Persians; yet she should not have refused in the manner she did, so as to set an example to wives of disobedience to husbands: but however the Persian women might have been misled by it, Christians should not follow it, for the New Testament teaches wives to be obedient to their husbands. See *Ephesians*, chap. v. ver. 12.

CHAPTER II.

Ver 1 to 21. Observe, that in the king's choice of Esther to be his queen in the room of Vashti, we may see the hand of God providing for the deliverance of his people by a very humble instrument.

Ver. 21 to the end. Observe, here, that this event likewise proved a means of the deliverance of the Jews, and was certainly ordered by Providence, as is shown in the course of Mordecai's history.

CHAPTER III.

The reason that Mordecai would not bow to Haman was, that he knew him to be an Amalekite, one of those people
who

who bore constant hatred to the God of Israel. Haman certainly must have been a very wicked as well as a very proud man, or he would not have desired to take such cruel revenge upon a whole nation for the affront he had received from one man. Ahasuerus was very unjust to consent that a whole people, who were under his protection, should be massacred without any inquiry into their fault, only because his favourite had said they were enemies to his state. No wonder that the city of Shushan should be perplexed, for it must grieve every humane or loyal person to see the king so absurd, and the innocent condemned to destruction. Observe, from this chapter, how dangerous it is to listen to detractors, and that we ought never to credit evil reports till we have first inquired into the truth of them.

CHAPTER IV.

Observe, that it was not for himself, but for his country and his religion, that Mordecai mourned so deeply. His last message to the queen showed that he had a strong faith in the power and goodness of God. The laws of Persia forbade Esther's approach to the king, without being called; but when she became sensible that the laws of God required her to sacrifice her life, if necessary, to preserve the nation to which she properly belonged, she resolved to run all hazards, but not till she had first desired the supplications of the people to the throne of God in her behalf. These things show the true piety of Mordecai and Esther.

CHAPTER V.

The kind reception which the king gave to Esther must be considered as the effect of her fasting and prayer, joined with the humiliation of the rest of the Jews. God, who turns the hearts of kings and princes in favour of those who trust in him, had disposed the heart of Ahasuerus towards Esther. Her inviting the king and Haman to two entertainments before she made her request, proceeded from her prudence, that she might with the more ease prevail upon the

king, and in his presence confound Haman. Observe, that this proud man, though in the height of all his glory, could taste no solid satisfaction whilst one poor Jew refused to bend the knee to him. Persons, possessed of every thing that they can reasonably desire, are often rendered unhappy by some secret trouble, which destroys their peace, especially the proud and ambitious; and their pride is their punishment, when they give way to envy, malice, and revenge. It often happens, also, that when the wicked seem to be the most firmly rooted, and oppress good men without control, their ruin is near at hand, and they themselves hurry it on by their crimes as Haman did.

CHAPTER VI.

Observe, that the unforeseen and surprising events recorded in this chapter, with the effects they produced, both with regard to Haman and the Jews, most undeniably prove that God, in his infinite wisdom and by his almighty power, was the disposer of them to deliver Mordecai and the Jews, and to confound their enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe, in this chapter, an example that God sometimes punishes the wicked in this life,

CHAPTER VIII.

We here see the truth of what is said in Scripture, that *the LORD raiseth the poor out of the dust, and setteth him with princes*; we may also learn from this chapter, that if the LORD suffers his servants to be afflicted, and sometimes delivers them into the hands of the wicked, he restores them to peace and prosperity. These are powerful motives to induce us to trust in God and to live good lives, that we may share in his protection.

CHAPTER IX.

The Jews forebore to take any spoil after this victory over their enemies, because they fought for their lives and their religion, and not to enrich themselves. After this they kept a solemn feast which Mordecai appointed to be observed annually by the Jews in memory of their deliverance. This feast is called Purim, and it is still kept up among the Jews, but usually in a very riotous manner, not as Mordecai enjoined, *ver.* 22, and as all public festivals ought to be kept.

CHAPTER X.

Observe, in this short chapter, that Mordecai continued good after he became rich and powerful, and that, instead of seeking his own wealth, he had a constant regard to the welfare of his brethren; for whose sake the LORD had graciously exalted him in the kingdom of Persia.

The *Book of Esther* shows us how kindly GOD watched over those Jews who did not return out of the land of their captivity with the rest. We find that even those who were scattered among the provinces of the heathen were taken care of as well as those who were gathered together in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved, when doomed to destruction, like sheep appointed to be slain. The *Book of Esther* is the last of the historical books of the Old Testament.

JOB.

JOB was a man highly distinguished by his patience and the constancy of his piety under the severest trials. The time when this holy man lived is uncertain; but it is supposed to have been when the children of Israel were in Egypt. His history is designed to show, that a truly pious man may, by the dispensations of heaven, be exposed to great afflictions in his person, family, and substance, without losing the favour of God. That there was such a person as Job, we learn from *Ezekiel, chap. xiv. ver. 14, and James, chap. v. ver. 11.*

This book is written in a figurative style; it is one of the poetical books of Scripture. In the study of it, we should particularly observe what sentiments, men, of the age in which Job lived, entertained concerning the principal points and the most important duties of religion.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, in the first *verse*, the character of Job. To be *perfect and upright*, signifies, to live according to the commandments and ordinances of God; to *eschew evil*, signifies, to abhor and shun all kinds of wickedness. Observe, also, that Job was in a very prosperous condition, and that he was, in his time, the greatest man of the East country; and the sacrifices he offered, in behalf of his sons, showed that he was a very religious man.

Ver. 6 to 13. By the *sons of God*, mentioned *ver. 6*, may be understood the ministering angels, whom the LORD employs in the protection of good men; see *Psalms xxxiv. ver. 7. Hebrews, i. ver. 14.* What is said concerning them and Satan, must not be taken in a literal sense, as a thing which

which actually happened, but only as a poetical way of saying that God withheld good angels for a time from protecting Job against the attacks of Satan, in order that he might be tried, and that he might gain a great reward for himself, and give the world an example of patience; also, to show that the devil can do no more against good people than God sees fit to permit him to do.

Ver. 13 to the end. From the eighth verse of this chapter we learn in what light Job was regarded by the Lord; we may therefore be certain that he remained in the favour of God all the while he was suffering afflictions. This should teach us that misfortunes are not always to be regarded as marks of the Divine displeasure, but as trials of virtue. Observe, *ver. 20, &c.* the manner in which Job received his afflictions; from which we should learn in the time of sorrow and distress to glorify God, by submitting without a murmur to whatever his providence allots for us; and not to charge God *foolishly*, that is *wickedly*, as using us hardly; but to bless God in adversity as well as in prosperity, since every thing that happens to us will be turned to our benefit if we do not hinder it ourselves.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. I to II. Observe, in these verses, the character of Satan, that he is full of hatred and malice, and that his delight is to torment mankind, but particularly good people. It was to confound him, as well as to try the patience of Job, that the devil was allowed to torment him as he did when he had got him in his power. Observe, the difference between Job's behaviour and that of his wife, and consider which was most likely to remove the evil; and what would have become of Job if, instead of resolving to bear with patience whatsoever the LORD saw fit to call upon him to suffer, he had followed her wicked advice, which would have led him to destroy himself, and plunge into eternity by a wicked act that could never be repented of. Take particular notice of Job's pious answer, *ver. 10*, and treasure it up in your mind against the day of affliction.

Ver. II to the end. Job's three friends were very kind in
going

going to mourn with him, and to comfort him; and we may judge that his state was miserable beyond any idea they had conceived of it, from the time they suffered to pass before they attempted to comfort him. They seem to have thought his grief too great to admit of consolation, and waited perhaps to hear his own sense of his miseries before they ventured to speak to him.

CHAPTER III.

The complaints which Job uttered when he first opened his mouth in the presence of his three friends, shows that Satan attacked his soul as well as his body; in this manner the devil usually tempts people who are overwhelmed with the troubles of life. Had Job made use of his reason at this time, he certainly would not have *curst the day of his birth*, and wished he had *never been born*; because had he not been born he could not have partaken of that resurrection in which he believed, as we learn from *chap. xix. ver. 25*. Every one who has this faith must think that it is a good thing to be born into the world, whatever troubles and calamities they may meet with in it. But in the beginning of great afflictions people are seldom capable of making proper reflections, and God graciously makes allowances for the infirmities of human nature, and in his own good time grants consolation when the complaints of the wretched do not proceed from a wicked and rebellious heart. However, we should call to mind that the condition God sees fit to place us in is always that which is best for our eternal interests, and that as sinners we deserve more severity than God ever shows towards us; and, in respect to Job, we must consider that he lived before the times of the gospel, and that he had not even such an example as his own to look up to; but that Christians have had a perfect pattern of patience as well as of every other virtue in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, therefore what was excusable in Job would not be so in a Christian.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that Eliphaz, the first of Job's friends who discoursed with him, tried to persuade him that he was afflicted on account of his sins; that the piety he had expressed during his prosperity was not sincere, and that he had not sufficiently considered his own unworthiness and imperfection. Eliphaz, though a good man, judged in this instance uncharitably; for though it is true that God never suffers the innocent to perish, we are not to judge hastily, that men who have appeared good are hypocrites, merely because they are afflicted; on the contrary, justice and piety require us to judge charitably of all persons in distress, especially when their lives have been blameless and even exemplary, as was the case with Job. But those who have really acted as Eliphaz supposed Job had done, may apply his words as a warning to themselves.

Ver. 12 to the end. In the early times in which Job and his friends lived, God frequently revealed himself by visions and dreams. Probably Eliphaz had entertained some improper notions concerning God, which the words of the spirit, or angel, he saw and heard in his dream, were designed to correct; and God afterwards caused them to be written in scripture, to remind mankind of the infinite difference there is betwixt Him and his creatures, that they might learn to reverence him.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to the end. In this part of his discourse Eliphaz treats of the judgments of God upon the wicked; and his observations are certainly very just, and should serve as a warning to all who read them not to lead wicked lives: but the application to Job, of what related to the wicked, was not right, because he was not a wicked man. However, the remarks and advice, in *ver. 6—8*, are suitable to every person in affliction, and such as Job might profit by and receive comfort from. The same may be said of all the latter
part

part of the chapter from *ver.* 14. Observe, in particular, *ver.* 17, 18, which are very properly introduced in the office for the Visitation of the Sick, in our Common Prayer-Book, as are *ver.* 6, 7, into that for the Burial of the Dead. Had Eliphaz lived after our Saviour's time, he would have been able to hold out spiritual and eternal blessings in addition to the temporal ones he enumerated in the concluding verses. To eternal blessings every true Christian is encouraged to look forward as a recompense for the troubles of this mortal life.

CHAPTER VI.

The description which Job here gives of the severity of his sufferings, and his endeavours to justify the complaints to which he had given way, shows that those whom God loves, and who fear him, may be reduced to a state of great misery, and may be overwhelmed with grief and sufferings through the suggestions of Satan and the infirmities of human nature, as to feel and express great impatience. But these are faults which, as we may understand from the history of Job, God graciously pardons; yet it is our duty to strive against them, and endeavour to keep from complaining even under the heaviest afflictions. Job's remonstrance with Eliphaz, and other friends, who it seems joined with the latter in accusing him, was very just; for, instead of soothing and comforting him, they did nothing but reproach him, and, by their uncharitable censure, they added bitterness to his grief, and irritated his temper. The proper behaviour to persons in distress is, to show tenderness and pity towards them, and to comfort their minds, by reminding them of the goodness of the Almighty, and of the wonderful deliverances which people in similar circumstances with themselves have experienced.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter gives a further description of Job's sufferings, and if we consider that, for good and wise purposes, the Al-

mighty withheld from him for a time the means of consolation which he usually bestows upon good people in seasons of affliction, and that Satan was permitted to exercise his malice upon him, we cannot wonder at his wishing to die. But he was mistaken in supposing that the dreams and visions with which he was terrified were sent from God: but the sense of sins, and the prayer for pardon, which he expressed in the two last verses show that the devil was not permitted to drive him to downright despair, or to make him think that he was other than a sinner in the sight of God, though he was conscious that he deserved not the reproaches of his friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

In this discourse of Bildad's are many important truths, which should serve as warnings to every one that reads it, not to be hypocrites; and should lead them to upright dealings; for as Bildad describes, so does God actually deal with those who act a deceitful and wicked part; but in respect to Job, Bildad was as cruel and unjust as his friend Eliphaz.

CHAPTER IX.

What Job says in this chapter proves that though he insisted upon it that he was not a wicked man, he did not pretend to be just before God. We should learn from him to reflect seriously and frequently upon those things which will lead us to acknowledge the greatness and majesty of the Supreme Being, and to trust in his mercy. Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, are names given by astronomers to some of the stars in the firmament.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter contains a continuation of Job's discourse with Bildad, and it affords proofs both of his piety and his weakness. His piety appears in his humble address to God, and in his confession that the Almighty Being, from whom he received his
life

life and all things, is perfectly righteous in all his ways. In this respect we should imitate Job. His wishes that he had never been born, and other extravagant expressions, are proofs of his weakness; for we may be sure that whatever sufferings are permitted to fall upon any of the human race are always intended for some wise and good purposes. Observe, that the violence of his troubles made Job say things which he would not have said in another condition. This is a lesson to us, always to endeavour, as our Saviour advises us, *to possess our souls in patience*, that our sufferings may never provoke us to murmur. All that we can safely do when we are afflicted is, to pray to God to pity our weakness, and to give us some ease in our affliction, and frequently to call to mind the example of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who submitted to greater sufferings than those which Job endured, without a murmur. If Job had had the advantage of our Saviour's example and doctrine, he would most probably have borne his affliction with still more patience than he did; but he exceeded all who lived in the world before our Saviour's coming.

CHAPTER XI.

Though Zophar condemned Job with great unkindness and severity, yet what he said, *ver. 7, &c.* of the power, wisdom, and justice of God, is very right, and deserving of our serious consideration. He was also very right in his observation that God is found of those that seek him with humility; and that, when sinners confess and forsake their sins, God's anger is appeased; and we may further learn from his discourse that nothing but a sincere piety and confidence in God can render us happy in this world, and enable us to pass our lives in peace and comfort. All this Job was very sensible of, and he had led a life accordingly. But his three friends together, with many just principles, had taken up some false prejudices, particularly that of believing that temporal afflictions are never sent but upon the wicked.

CHAPTER XII.

It appears from this chapter that though in the greatness of his affliction, and when strongly assailed by his spiritual enemy, Job complained beyond measure; he still retained just notions of the Almighty. The use we ought to make of the great truths he uttered is this, to meditate upon them frequently and seriously, that we may learn from them to be patient in adversity, and to submit to the divine will in all things.

CHAPTER XIII.

Job's answer to his friends, and what he says concerning God and the righteousness of his proceedings towards men, shows very plainly that if Job complained too bitterly of his afflictions his complaints were the effect of infirmity, and did not proceed from an evil principle. This chapter furnishes us with excellent proofs of Job's piety, of his hope and confidence in God, and of his profound humility. Observe, in particular, *ver.* 15, 16, and remember that under the severest affliction, we ought always to trust in God, and to implore his mercy and compassion.

CHAPTER XIV.

Observe, in this chapter, what a striking picture is given of the vanity of human life. We see that it is short and attended with many miseries, that we do not enjoy any certain happiness in it, and that it must at last end in death. The use we ought to make of these reflections is, not to be too fond of this life, or of the things of this world, which are all vain and transitory; to moderate our joys in prosperity, and to suffer adversity with patience; to entreat the LORD to assist us by his holy spirit whilst we are in this life, and above all to pardon our sins. We should also, as Christians, praise God that we have in the gospel a sure and certain hope

of the resurrection, as a sure remedy against the vanity of the world, and against death itself. Our great care therefore should be to improve the time and other means which God affords us whilst we are here, that we may secure to ourselves the possession of rest and everlasting blessings in the world to come.

CHAPTER XV.

Observe, that Eliphaz could not be persuaded that Job had not been guilty of abominable wickedness, and that he entertained unworthy notions of God. But mistaken as he was in this respect, we may learn many useful lessons from his discourse, particularly, that mankind should never murmur at the dispensations of God whatever befalls them, but should be humble in their own eyes as corrupt creatures. Observe, in the latter part of this chapter, from *ver.* 19, the just and lively description which is given of the terrors that the wicked suffer even at the time they appear to be driving the world before them, and defying the power of the Almighty. This should raise in our minds a strong dread of sin, and make us resolve to lead a godly life.

CHAPTER XVI.

Job might well call his three friends *miserable comforters*, for they had done nothing but accuse him of crimes he was innocent of. How men, so religious as they all appear to have been, could be so unfeeling with such a deplorable object before their eyes is surprising! but it was all owing to the false notions they had taken up respecting afflictions, which they regarded as never-failing signs of great wickedness; therefore, instead of pitying Job, they looked upon him with abhorrence, and treated him as a reprobate and an outcast. Had he even been such, they should have proceeded in a different manner, for their reproaches were only likely to drive him to despair; but though he was exposed to the persecutions of the great enemy of mankind, and to the bitter torments
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and reproaches of his friends, he was not forsaken of God. What we cannot but condemn in Job's friends, we must endeavour to avoid ourselves; and, in order to keep us from judging uncharitably of our fellow creatures, we should frequently call to mind the example of our blessed Redeemer, and his heavenly precepts of mercy and compassion.

CHAPTER XVII.

Job speaks here as if death was the only comfort and deliverance he expected; this shows that at that time he was overcome with excess of grief at the unkindness of his friends. If he had reflected as he did upon many occasions, he would not have uttered such expressions of despondency as are to be found in this chapter; but we must remember that Satan was always ready to take advantage of his infirmities by suggesting improper thoughts respecting God's dealings with him. Observe, what he says, in *ver. 14, &c.* and compare it with *chap. xix. ver. 25, &c.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bildad here accuses Job of presumption, and shows him that it is usual with God to send down his judgments upon the wicked and their posterity. This is in general true, and we should take warning from it not to be wicked; but we must take care not to abuse this doctrine so as to imagine that all those who are in adversity are wicked men, since Job is an instance that God sometimes, for wise and just reasons, permits those whom he loves to be reduced to a very forlorn and wretched condition.

CHAPTER XIX.

The description Job gives, *ver. 14, &c.* of the flights he met with from his kindred and servants, shows that he had no outward comfort; and it is very affecting to read, *ver. 21, 22,* how earnestly he called upon his friends to pity him.

Nothing could have added to his misery but the terrors of a guilty conscience; these he had not, and it appears that, in this deep distress, when he was on the brink of despair, God graciously comforted him with the hopes of a happy resurrection through a Redeemer. His words, *ver.* 25, 26, 27, are very remarkable, and he may be considered as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christians, in time of affliction, having the promises of the gospel to confirm their blessed hope of a happy resurrection, may also say with humble confidence that they know their Redeemer liveth, and that he will raise them from the dead at the last day, and take to his heavenly kingdom all who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality.

CHAPTER XX.

In this chapter Zophar very justly observes, that if wicked men are happy in this world their happiness does not last long; that God takes away their riches and their strength, and that his wrath falls upon them and their families. Though this did not apply to Job's case, we often see it verified; and we should learn from the frequent repetitions of these great truths in the book of Job, to dread the effects of God's wrath, and to avoid the practice of all kinds of wickedness.

CHAPTER XXI.

In this chapter Job teaches us how to judge of prosperity and adversity. The conclusion we ought to draw from hence is, not to judge of the happiness or misery of men, nor of the share they have of the divine favour or displeasure by what befalls them in this world, but to look for the punishment of the wicked, and the true reward of the righteous, in the inward state of their souls, and their final lot in a future state.

CHAPTER XXII.

Though Eliphaz continued to do Job great injustice in the accusations he laid against him, his discourse is worthy of our most serious consideration; for it plainly shows, that men, by doing good actions, and leading righteous lives, cannot add to the happiness of God, but that the advantage is all to themselves. This should teach us that if God gives us laws, and commands us to observe them, he does it for our own good only; and if we offend and disobey him, it is ourselves alone we hurt. Such crimes, as Eliphaz laid to the charge of Job, *ver. 9, &c.* will certainly bring down severe judgments on those who practise them; but this was very far from being the case with Job. What Eliphaz says of the knowledge of God is also very just; and the last words of his discourse, *ver. 21 to the end*, are very useful and instructive: but a Christian will not look for worldly riches and prosperity when he has reconciled himself to God by penitence and prayer, but for those spiritual blessings, to which the gold of Ophir, and all the treasures of the East, are not worthy to be compared.

CHAPTER XXIII.

To judge properly of what Job says in this chapter, we must observe that it is a reply to Eliphaz, who had accused him of injustice and hypocrisy; to which Job answers, that he was innocent of those crimes, and was willing to appear before him, and submit to his judgment: and in this respect he called upon God to witness his integrity; not that he pretended to be blameless before God. We may learn from hence that good men may lawfully maintain their own innocence when they are unjustly accused, and when they have the testimony of a good conscience; but they ought nevertheless always to confess their own weakness, give glory to God even when he afflicts them, and acknowledge that he is perfectly righteous and supremely wise in all his dispensations towards them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Job describes, in this discourse, the impiety, injustice, cruelty, and other crimes of the wicked, and desires his friends to take notice that God does not always display his vengeance upon them; that they even frequently succeed in their ill designs; but that, however, God sees them, and overtakes them. This doctrine is worthy of our serious consideration, that our faith may not fail while we see the wicked prosper and the righteous afflicted. Observe, that Job's mind was much more calm and composed after he had declared his hope in the resurrection, through a Redeemer, than it was before.

CHAPTER XXV.

What Bildad here says concerning the power, holiness, and righteousness of God, and the frailty and corruption of man, is very true. No human creature is so pure in his sight that he may justify himself before God, and say *I am righteous*. We ought therefore to humble ourselves before the Almighty, and submit to his holy will in all things.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Job's answer to Bildad should lead us to consider that we know but a very small part of the works of God, and that we cannot comprehend all the reasons of God's conduct in the government of the world. That God is so great, so powerful, so just, so wise, that we ought not to pry into his ways with too much curiosity; since, though some things are hidden from us, enough is revealed to teach us to love and fear him, and render us happy if we make a right use of it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Job's resolution, expressed at the beginning of the chapter, shows that he was truly an upright man; and it is such as every Christian should commit to memory and adopt as his own, especially when he is unjustly accused, for no reproaches carry such a sting with them as those of a guilty heart; whilst conscience and integrity will support the mind under the worst treatment and the greatest misfortunes.

The portion of the wicked, particularly hypocrites, is well described by Job in the remaining part of the chapter; their end must be miserable; for what can fill their minds but horror and despair when God shall require their souls, and call them to judgment.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

From this part of Job's discourse we learn that God has endued men with the knowledge of many things in nature, which are of great use in the various circumstances of life, for which they have great reason to acknowledge the divine goodness; but that **WISDOM**, by which is to be understood *that* wisdom which relates to the good of our souls, is only to be learnt of God; it cannot be attained as human arts and sciences are, by our natural understanding, the only way to acquire this wisdom is, to study with an humble mind the revealed will of God, which we now have in the Scriptures, and to pray to God to give us the help of his **HOLY SPIRIT** to enable us to understand them aright, and by these means we shall learn the truth of Job's declaration in the *28th verse*. To this study then we should apply our minds with all diligence, and endeavour to live in the fear of the **LORD** and the practice of holiness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

What an affecting picture does Job here give of his former prosperous state! But let us observe that it was not from vain-glory that he spoke of his own integrity and other virtues, but to show that God did not afflict him on account of his crimes, and that he had not really made an ill use of his prosperity as his friends so positively affirmed. The account Job gives of the manner in which he had conducted himself in the days of his prosperity, ought to teach all who enjoy riches, or authority, or any other advantages, to employ them to noble purposes, to be just and upright, and above all to be good to the poor, to comfort the miserable, and to defend the cause of those who suffer wrongfully.

CHAPTER XXX.

From the last chapter we learn that while Job was in prosperity he was respected by all; but we here read that as soon as he fell into adversity every one forsook him, and he was insulted even by the vilest of the people. Thus it happens every day; men make their court to riches, and honours, and credit in the world, but abandon the possessors of them as soon as they are deprived of these advantages. No one therefore should overvalue them, or build their happiness upon them. But we should, from Job's complaint, be led to consider how very trying it must be to one who has been a benefactor to others to meet with such an ungrateful return for his good deeds. The painful recollections which crowded into Job's mind while he compared his former with his present condition quite overpowered him, and made him think at the moment that God had forsaken him; but this certainly was not the case, as was fully proved to him afterward.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter should be read and meditated upon with great attention, as it contains proper sentiments concerning the principal duties of religion, and particularly purity and chastity, justice and charity, alms-giving, compassion to the miserable, contempt of worldly goods, piety towards God, the love of our enemies, and confession of sins. By *not kissing his hand* when he beheld the sun and the moon, *ver. 26, &c.* Job meant that he had never worshipped the heavenly bodies like the idolatrous people of that country. If Job had such pure and exalted notions, and practised so much piety and morality in his time, much more must it be the duty of Christians to think and act as he did. It is an unspeakable alleviation of the sufferings of every good man, to be able to say with truth as Job did, that he had faithfully discharged his duty in a state of prosperity.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It appears from this and the following chapters that Elihu, though young, was a very wise man, and that he had great zeal for the honour of God. He blamed Job for giving way too much to complaints, and for speaking too highly of himself; but at the same time he blamed his other friends for condemning him without giving good reasons for doing so. Observe, in particular, *ver. 8 and 13*, which show that true wisdom comes from God, and that he confounds those who trust in their own wisdom.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

By the manner in which Elihu addressed Job, it appears that he entertained nearly the same opinion of him as his other three friends; but instead of reproaching him as they did, he endeavoured to convince him of his errors by speaking to him in God's stead; and his design was to convince Job
that

that he was in the wrong to speak so much of his innocence, and to complain as he had done. In the latter part of the chapter Elihu represents, in a very convincing manner, God's dealings with men, and the various ways he makes use of to recover them from their sins. Though he was mistaken in respect to Job's principle, the instructions of Elihu are of the greatest use and importance; and whether we enjoy health and ease, or are exposed to affliction, diseases, and sufferings, we ought frequently to call them to mind, by reading this chapter, from which we may learn to make a good use of the various warnings which God gives us, and of every thing he does for our salvation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

We should learn from this chapter that when God corrects and chastens us, we ought to humble ourselves, to beseech him to make us sensible of all our crimes, and to promise never more to fall into those sins by which we have offended him. Observe, in particular, *ver.* 21, 22, 23, 29, 31, 32.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The reasoning in this chapter is very just, and it should lead us to reflect that God being perfectly happy, and having no need of us, he neither commands nor forbids any thing but for our good; and that we should therefore cheerfully obey all God's commands, because, in so doing, we labour for our own happiness, and should take heed not to offend God by our sins, lest we provoke his anger.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The substance of what Elihu here teaches is, that the Almighty rejects no man, and that he continually beholds the upright; but when the sins of men increase, he afflicts them to make them wise, and to turn them from their iniquity; that if they hear his voice and serve him, he delivers them,
and

and makes them end their days in peace; but as for hypocrites, and such as harden their hearts and despise his word and his correction, he sends his wrath upon them. We should learn from this chapter to fear God's judgments, and to adore his infinite power and majesty, which so evidently appear in all his works.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

These words of Elihu engage us most seriously to reflect upon the wonders of Nature, and particularly upon the thunder, snow, rain, clouds, the winds, and the various seasons of the year, in all of which the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God are displayed; since God makes use of them, and the different effects they produce in the world, as means to promote the good and happiness of mankind, and sometimes he makes them serve as instruments of correction. Here ends the dispute between Job and his friends, and from the account we have in this book of what passed, we learn that the knowledge of God and religion was far from being totally extinguished in the East, and that there were men in it who had made great improvements in piety and knowledge; those therefore who forsook God, and worshipped idols, were without excuse.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

As it had pleased God that Job should be afflicted beyond the common lot of human kind, and that he should, by venting his complaints, show what are the fears, the misgivings of heart, and the errors into which even good people, without His immediate help, are apt to fall, under the various trials of life; and as those who had taken upon themselves to bring Job to a sense of the sins they imputed to him, had not acted as they ought to have done towards a man of his character in such distressing circumstances, God himself vouchsafed to instruct Job, and through him all who should read his history, by showing the weakness and ignorance of human nature, and the astonishing wisdom displayed in the
works

works of the creation, in order to convince him that it is in vain to strive against the dispensations of the Almighty ; and that humble and entire resignation to the divine will, is the duty of man under trials and afflictions of every kind. It is impossible for us to know all the reasons for God's dealings with his creatures, but we may be sure that he constantly acts with justice and goodness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter is a continuation of the description of the wonders of creation and Providence, which are displayed in the several natures of the creatures here named, and their different qualities and instincts with which they are endued for their own subsistence and the preservation of their young, which afford evident proofs that an Almighty Being of infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness was the maker of them, and that He, by his providence, is the governor of them all. The description of the war-horse, at the end of the chapter, is wonderfully fine. It is very proper and useful to reflect on the things treated of in this chapter, and we should do so on the sabbath-day in particular.

CHAPTER XL.

In the confessions which Job makes at the beginning of this chapter, we should observe the effect which all the wonderful works of God should have upon us, namely, to convince us of our own ignorance and weakness, and to humble us before God. The animal called Behemoth, in the 15th *verse*, is by some supposed to mean either the elephant or the sea-horse, but most probably it was some other animal, the largest and most powerful of the beasts.

CHAPTER XLI.

The creature called Leviathan is supposed to be the crocodile. Though this creature and the Behemoth are not known
to

to us, as they were to those of the country which Job inhabited, we cannot but admire what is said of them in these chapters, and the description of them should lead us to consider the wonders of divine power and wisdom in those creatures with which we *are* acquainted. All the works of God are wonderful and perfect, and we should frequently examine them and reflect upon their curious make and useful qualities, in order to raise our souls to the knowledge of God our Creator, and incline us to love, adore, and fear him.

CHAPTER XLII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe, in these verses, that Job entirely submitted himself to the dispensations of the Almighty, and charged himself with wickedness for having given way to complaints under the divine chastisements. This was the temper of mind suitable to his situation, and he was brought into it by the word of God, which should teach us to have recourse to the Scriptures in times of sorrow and affliction. Job's trials were perhaps the greatest that were ever endured by a mere man, and we are to remember that the devil was continually tempting him to curse God and die; but the LORD would not put him entirely in the power of his spiritual enemy, he was ever at hand to succour him when he was ready to sink from the weakness of human nature, and at last God vouchsafed to appear himself and reason with Job; and all that God said to Job may be applied to every person in affliction, who is tempted to entertain such thoughts as Job sometimes had, and to utter such complaints as frequently escaped his lips, and it is very comfortable to see that there will be favour shown, if these do not proceed from a wicked heart, and are sincerely repented of.

Ver. 7 to 10. God's reproof of Job's three friends plainly proves that they had done wrong in condemning him, and affirming that adversity is a mark of God's displeasure; which should teach us never to judge hardly of persons in affliction. The command which God gave to Eliphaz to have recourse to Job's intercession with his friend Bildad and Zophar, shows that the prayers of good men have great efficacy. St.

James, in his Epistle, says, that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Ver. 10 to the end. We here see how GOD, after he had tried holy Job by affliction, till he was perfectly resigned to his divine will, put a happy end to his troubles, and so blessed him that he had twice as much as he had lost before, and lived happily to a very great age. By the restoration of Job to health, prosperity, and peace, the wicked designs of Satan for his destruction were defeated; and it was made evident that he had no power over good people except when God sees fit to suffer him to tempt them for the trial of their virtue, or the correction of their faults. The use we should make of the history contained in this book is, to learn from it never to cast off our confidence in God in time of trouble and affliction, but to suffer patiently and make a happy improvement of our trials to the glory of God and the good of our souls.

PSALMS.

THE book of Psalms is a collection of sacred hymns, most of which were composed by king David, but some of them by other prophets and holy men, who, in their hours of meditation and prayer, were inspired with such sentiments of fear and reverence for the majesty of God, with such faith and confidence in divine goodness and compassion, and with such delightful hopes, as altogether constitute *true devotion*; so that, by reading the Psalms, we may know assuredly what true devotion is, and if we have a real desire to pray we shall feel the same sentiments kindled in our own hearts according to the circumstances we happen to be in whilst we read these divine compositions, as the writers of them felt whilst they penned them; and shall be furnished at the same time with

words

words to express our feelings properly; for they are the words of *divine inspiration*, preserved by the grace and favour of God, for the members of the church to the end of the world, whether assembled together for public worship, or retired to their closets, to pour forth their souls in adoration before their heavenly Father *who seeth in secret*.

Some of the Psalms are *historical*; they were written to preserve the remembrance of remarkable things that happened to the Jewish nation; others are *prophetical*. Those were written to foretell things relating to our blessed Saviour and the times of the gospel, many of which have been fulfilled, but others remain to be accomplished; others are penitential, expressive of humiliation for sin; others are devotional, consisting of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. The Psalms also contain many of the *promises* and *threatenings* of God, and teach us what the *righteous* and *wicked* may expect from the Almighty.

From this short account of the Psalms it must appear that the reading and meditating upon them will be attended with very great advantages. The Psalms were used by the people of God in the temple service, as we read in the *Books of Kings and Chronicles*; and they very properly make a part of public as well as private worship to Christians, for devotion is the same thing in every state of the church.

FIRST DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM I.

Observe, the divine promise with which this Psalm begins, and consider to what kind of people it is made.

Ver. 1. To walk in the *counsel* of the ungodly, &c. signifies to live according to the advice of wicked people. To sit in the seat of the *scornful*, signifies to make a mock at religion under the pretence of wisdom.

Ver. 2. To meditate on the law of the LORD, means to call to mind the commandments of God and other parts of Scripture, and consider seriously what they are designed to teach us, and how far we have lived according to them. David
had

had great delight in this holy exercise, and so has every devout person who sets in earnest about it, and it may be practised by day and by night; for we may think of these things whilst we are employed in many kinds of worldly business, and in our waking hours whilst we are resting in our beds.

Ver. 3, 4. Observe, to what the Psalmist compares the *righteous* and the *wicked*. The *fruits* which good people bring forth are, good works in this world, and everlasting happiness in the world to come. It does not always happen that good people have prosperity in this world, yet whatever they do may be said to *prosper*, because by the blessing of God even their sufferings promote their eternal interests. The *judgment* of the last day is that wherein *sinners will not be able to stand*; the *congregation of the righteous* means the society of the blessed in heaven. Take particular notice of the last verse, and let it lead you to resolve upon meditating in the law of God day and night, and living agreeably to it.

If we regard this Psalm, as written by divine inspiration, it will be found to contain great and precious promises to the righteous; and dreadful threatenings to the ungodly.

PSALM II.

This is one of the prophetic Psalms. The writer of it, king David, was inspired to foretell the opposition which would be made to the kingdom of Christ, both by Jews and Gentiles. St. Peter shows in what manner the three first verses of it were fulfilled in his time, *see Acts, chap. iv. ver. 21, &c.* The expressions, in *ver. 4, 5, 6*, are figurative, and signify that the LORD will regard those as contemptible persons, though they be kings and rulers, who set themselves up against Christ, and that he will establish his kingdom in defiance of them.

Ver. 7 to 10. In these verses the prophet foretold that the law of the gospel which God had decreed to be declared by his only-begotten Son, should be published, and that the heathen nations should be brought into subjection to him. St. Paul refers to these verses in the *1st chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, ver. 5*, to prove to the Jews that Jesus was really

really and truly the Son of God and higher than the highest angels.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, that the kingdom of Christ has been established in the world to a great degree, notwithstanding all the opposition that has been made to it by kings and great men of the earth; and Christians, who have the happiness to be Christ's subjects, should follow the prophet's advice in this verse. The expression, *kiss the Son*, signifies, be reconciled to Christ, pay him the homage due to him, that you may be partakers of the spiritual and eternal blessings he has purchased for his faithful people.

Some of the predictions in this Psalm will not be fulfilled till our Saviour's second Advent.

PSALM III.

This Psalm is said to have been composed by King David when he fled from his son Absalom; see the history of Absalom's rebellion in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th chapters of the 2d Book of Samuel. It shows us that David, in the midst of his affliction, had the comforts of the Holy Spirit to support him; and such comforts as were vouchsafed to him will be granted in the day of affliction to every one who places a firm trust in the goodness and mercy of God. A shield, to which the providence of God is compared, *ver. 3*, is a part of armour formerly worn in battle on the arm to guard the bodies of the warriors against the weapons of the enemy.

PSALM IV.

Observe, in this Psalm, how earnestly David prayed to God in the time of his distress, and the comfortable thoughts and hopes with which he was inspired. Thus it will be with every Christian who follows the advice of the Psalmist, *ver. 4, 5*. The sacrifice of righteousness, for the people of God in David's time, was the lamb, by which the Redeemer was represented; but for Christians it is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Yet how many entirely neglect this holy ordinance as if it were of no use, or keep from it through fear,

as if it was ordained for their destruction instead of their comfort and salvation. Those who follow David in his piety will be enabled by the same Holy Spirit that inspired him to lay down their heads in peace with full confidence in the protection of God during the hours of darkness and repose. The word, *leaving*, *ver. 2*, signifies *falsehood* and *deceit*.

PSALM V.

Observe, as in the foregoing Psalm, that in his distress David had recourse to meditation and prayer; and that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit with an assurance that the wicked cannot hurt those whom God protects. Observe, also, his resolution to go to the house of God, and his humble petition, *ver. 8*, which are suitable to every faithful servant of God when they are persecuted, or ill-treated, by wicked and worldly-minded men.

By *the foolish*, *ver. 5*, are meant wicked persons. *To be led by God*, *ver. 8*, signifies to be guided by the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 9*, gives a true character of wicked persons. David's petition, *ver. 10*, related not to his own private enemies, but to the enemies of God, the idolatrous nations who endeavoured to destroy the church whom he was raised up on purpose to cut off. *Ver. 11, 12*, are very comfortable to the righteous.

FIRST DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM VI.

This is the first of the Psalms which are called *penitential*. The four first verses of it express the humility of a sinner who has a strong sense of his sins, and the need he has of divine assistance; and the three following ones show the agonies of mind which David at that time endured; but we find from the concluding verses, that in the midst of his sufferings his prayer was granted, and he felt the inward consolations of the Holy Spirit. This proves that when sinners have

have recourse to GOD with humility and faith, they may be sure he will grant their requests as far as will be for their good, and that he will afford them a comfortable sense of his favour and protection.

PSALM VII.

This Psalm is said to have been sung by David to the LORD concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite. Who this person was is uncertain; but it appears from David's complaints that he had been unjustly used and traduced by somebody. We should learn from it that if we would have GOD defend us against our enemies we should take care to be free from iniquity ourselves. A slanderer of others cannot expect GOD to vindicate him when he is evil spoken of. And we should further learn from this Psalm that though GOD may let the wicked escape for a time, he prepares for them the punishment they deserve, and will cause the evil they designed for others to fall upon their own heads if they continue in their wickedness.

PSALM VIII.

Observe, in this Psalm, that David considered the works of the creation as proofs of the power, wisdom, and goodness of GOD; and that he praised the LORD, with a thankful heart, for creating mankind after his own image. His words are proper for all human creatures, as we all have the same nature, and have the same firmament over our heads, in which we may behold the sun, moon, and stars, and all of us have dominion over the lower creatures. But whilst we use the words of David we should lift up our hearts to GOD as he did, and gratefully resolve to improve to the glory of GOD the blessings he has graciously bestowed, and resolve not to disgrace our nature by doing things contrary to our natural reason and the revealed will of GOD.

Our blessed Saviour, when he made his public entry into Jerusalem, as related, *Matthew, chap. xxi. ver. 16*, applied the words of the second verse of this Psalm to the children

who cried hofanna in the temple; by which he showed that children may join in the praises of God, and that their doing so is pleasing to him. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, refers to the 5th and 6th verses of this Psalm, as relating in a particular manner to our blessed Saviour in his human nature. See *Hebrews*, chap. ii. ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

SECOND DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM IX.

In this Psalm David expresses his piety, joy, and gratitude, on account of the victories he had gained, by the divine assistance, over the heathens; but Christians should apply it chiefly to their advantages over their spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, obtained by means of their blessed Redeemer. Observe, the threatenings against the heathen nations, which may be applied to all those who do the works of the devil instead of the works of God. Observe, also, that David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak of hell, which proves that there is such a place; and take notice, ver. 17, who will be sent to it.

Take particular notice, also, of ver. 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, and 18, which describe God's ways. By Zion, ver. 11, was meant Mount Sion; and by the daughter of Zion, ver. 14, the city of Jerusalem which was built upon it.

PSALM X.

Observe, in this Psalm, the description which the prophet gives of those wicked people who persecute the innocent and defy the Almighty, and the hopes he expressed that his prayer in favour of the latter would be heard. The complaints which the Psalmist makes in this Psalm should teach us not to be surprised if we see the righteous sometimes oppressed, and the wicked succeeding in their unjust and cruel designs. Wicked men often employ both deceit and force to destroy the good, and God, for wise and good reasons, suffers the innocent to be oppressed for a time for the trial of their faith,

and the exercise of their virtues; but when the wicked think they have nothing to fear, and that God will not notice their sins, he takes vengeance upon their crimes, and delivers the humble, who are never forgotten or forsaken. Take particular notice of *ver.* 14, 17, 18. The *covetous*, *ver.* 3, signify people whose minds are wholly set upon worldly things, and who will stop at no wickedness to obtain them.

PSALM XI.

This Psalm furnishes us with an example of the confidence which the righteous have in the LORD their GOD, who is their sure refuge even when they are in the most deplorable condition, and know not what will become of them. Take particular notice of *ver.* 5, 6, 7.

SECOND DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XII.

David's complaint of the small number of good people in his time, and his prayer to God upon this account, teaches us that when iniquity abounds we ought to pray to God that he would deliver us from the snares and malice of the wicked, and give us grace to avoid imitating them. If we walk in uprightness God will always be our defender and protector; but if we give ourselves up to wickedness, he will cut us off from his favour and the kingdom of heaven.

PSALM XIII.

This Psalm is very proper for persons in affliction, and especially for those who labour under their sins and are deprived of the sense of God's love. Such as are in this sad condition should not despair, but rather have recourse to God with confidence, implore his compassion, and beseech him to comfort them and enlighten them with his grace, lest they sink under the load of their afflictions; and when God has

delivered them, it is their duty to celebrate his mercy and praise him for all his goodness to them.

PSALM XIV.

Ver. 1. A *natural fool*, signifies a person who has no understanding; a *spiritual fool*, signifies one who has no regard for religion. The *atheist*, or person who denies that there is a God, is the worst of fools.

By *the children of men*, *ver. 2*, are meant those who set their minds upon the things of this world. These people turn away from God's commandments and oppress *the righteous*, but by doing so they provoke the divine vengeance; for all their wicked doings are seen of God, who constantly watches over his faithful people, and will never suffer them to be destroyed by the wicked, though he permits them to be afflicted for a time. David's description of *the children of men* in his days, agrees with what we may observe of such people in our own; they live as if they believed there was no God. We ought seriously to meditate upon what is said in this Psalm, that we may be preserved from such corruptions, and that we may be reckoned among the people of God, the generation of the righteous, who will have cause to rejoice when Christ cometh in the clouds to deliver them out of this evil world, and to receive them to his heavenly kingdom, of which the deliverances of the Israelites from their captivity was a type or figure.

THIRD DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XV.

By abiding *in the Tabernacle of God*, *ver. 1*, and *dwelling in his holy hill*, may be understood belonging to the church of God on earth, and being admitted into heaven hereafter. This very instructive Psalm teaches us that God will not admit all men into his presence, nor esteem them members of his church, but only such as live upright holy lives.

PSALM XVI.

In this Psalm we may observe what are the sentiments of the children of God and their happiness; they always trust in God, love and esteem the virtuous above all others, avoid the company and errors of the wicked, and keep steadily to the pure worship and service of God. The sense of his favour makes them continually to rejoice in him and praise him, and they are certain he will not abandon them to the power of death, but will give them a joyful resurrection.

The three last verses of this Psalm contain a prophecy relating to the resurrection of our blessed Redeemer, and are so applied by St. Peter. *See Acts, chap. ii. ver. 11, &c.*

PSALM XVII.

The confidence with which David calls upon God in this Psalm, shows the great advantages of an honest and sincere heart, since in all conditions and circumstances good men can apply to God with assurance, knowing that He will always be their protector. On the other hand, we here learn that God knows the ways of the ungodly, and let their power be ever so great, he will not fail to restrain their wickedness and pride.

Ver. 1. Prayers that go out of *feigned lips*, signify such prayers as hypocrites make without any devotion in their hearts.

Ver. 4, 5. *The paths of the destroyer*, signify the ways into which the devil tempts men for their everlasting destruction. *God's paths* are the ways into which he guides those who desire to do their duty by means of his Word and his Holy Spirit.

Ver. 8. To be kept as the apple of the eye, signifies to be preserved with the greatest care. *The shadow of God's wings*, means his providence.

Ver. 13, 14. The wicked are called the sword of the Lord, and his hand, because God frequently makes use of them to cut off others from the earth. *Men of the world*, are the same who are called in the 14th Psalm, ver. 2, *the children of men*.

Ver. 15. *To behold God's face in righteousness*, signifies to stand before GOD as a just person cleansed from sin, in whom the image of GOD is renewed. But it is only through the merits of our Redeemer that we can be thus justified.

THIRD DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XVIII.

This Psalm was composed and sung by David in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul.

Ver. 1. While David was persecuted by Saul and other enemies, he had occasion to shelter himself from their fury by fleeing to *rocks* and *fortified places*, and he was obliged to wear armour to defend himself from being hurt by their weapons. By calling the LORD his *rock*, his *fortress*, &c. David acknowledged that he did not owe his safety and deliverance to human means, but to the constant care and providence of GOD.

Ver. 7 to 10. From these verses it appears that the Psalmist had had a glorious vision of the majesty of GOD, like those seen by other prophets.

Ver. 16. *Many waters*, signified *great troubles*, which seemed to overwhelm him like a flood.

Ver. 20. As king of Israel, and captain of the LORD's inheritance, David was very faithful and upright, and when he wrote this Psalm he had not been guilty of the crime of causing Uriah to be put to death.

Ver. 27 to the end. We should observe that David ascribed all his victories and successes to the power and goodness of GOD. Christians should adopt his sentiments not only in respect to the affairs of the present world, but in their *spiritual warfare*, for it is GOD alone who can arm them against the power of darkness and give them salvation. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, see chap. vi. ver. 13 to 18, describes the whole armour of GOD, by which we may repel *all the fiery darts of the devil*,

In the victories which David gained over the heathen nations, he was a type of the Messiah ; and this Psalm may be applied to our blessed Saviour, as the promised seed of David, the true king of Israel.

FOURTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XIX.

Ver. 1 to 7. The meaning of *verses 2, 3*, is, that there is no nation, or language, to which the instruction to be learnt from the heavenly bodies does not reach ; not indeed by the faculty of speech, but they address themselves silently to the heart of every attentive beholder, convincing him that there must be an all-wise and powerful God.

The sun is pointed out in the three following verses as another wonderful proof of divine power and wisdom to the whole world, as his light and heat is diffused to every part of it.

Ver. 7 to 12. Observe, what David says of the laws and commandments of God, which are certainly more valuable than the most excellent things of this world, because they enlighten our minds, sanctify our hearts, and fill us with joy and comfort.

Ver. 12 to the end. David's prayer, in these verses, is suitable to all the servants of God. Many an *error* and *secret fault* is committed by the best of men, for which they stand in need to be cleansed by the atonement of the Redeemer and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. *Presumptuous sins*, are those which are wilfully committed in defiance of God's commandments, which, if not timely repented of and forsaken, will constitute the great offence that will condemn the guilty to eternal misery. The grace of God is necessary to regulate the *words of our mouths*, and the *meditations of our hearts*, for which we should daily pray to God, our *strength* and our *Redeemer*.

PSALM XX.

This Psalm appears to have been made by king David for his people to use in his behalf when he was going to battle, and it is very suitable to the church of God in all ages of the world. Christian people are expressly commanded to pray for the kings and princes whom God sets over them; *see 1st Timothy, chap. ii. ver. 1, 2, 3.* They should also beg of God to support their kings and princes in time of war, and in all their lawful undertakings. The glory and security of kings and states, depends upon the divine favour and protection, to which they are to attribute all their victories and success, and both kings and their subjects should strive above all things, by a regard to the laws and commandments of God, to render him propitious to them.

PSALM XXI.

This Psalm describes the glory of the kingdom of Israel in the days of king David, as a type of the kingdom of the Messiah, and it is considered as prophetic of our blessed Saviour's final triumph over all his enemies, on which account it is used as one of the proper Psalms for *the Ascension-Day*.

FOURTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXII.

Ver. 1 to 22. This is also a prophetic Psalm relating to the sufferings of the Messiah; every part of it, from the beginning to the *22d verse*, points to some circumstance or other of our Saviour's Passion. *Ver. 1* contains the very words he spoke when he hung in agony upon the cross. *See Matthew, chap. xxvii. ver. 46; Mark, chap. xv. ver. 34;* and those which follow were equally suitable to his state of humiliation. *Ver. 7, 8, 16,* evidently allude to the reproaches and

and revilings of the Jews, who might justly be compared to *mad bulls* and *roaring lions*, worrying and tormenting the *Lamb of God*. The piercing of his hands and his feet, are foretold in the *16th verse*, and the parting of his garments in the *18th*. The other intermediate *verses* describe in a very affecting manner the great agonies of mind as well as body which our blessed LORD endured whilst he was suffering for the sins of the world; but, great as they were, he would not end them by coming down from the cross, because he had resolved to give his life for the redemption of mankind.

Ver. 22 to the end. These verses contain a hymn of triumph, in which the Redeemer, whilst hanging on the cross, foreseeing his resurrection, declares what he will do when he rises from the dead, and calls up all the house of Israel to praise the LORD for the happy effects of the redemption purchased by him. *Ver. 27* foretells the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ. The former part of this Psalm should lead us to serious meditation on the sufferings and death of our blessed Redeemer; and as every part of the prophecy was exactly fulfilled, it should strengthen our faith in him as the Messiah, and increase our love and reverence for him; while the latter part should lead us to reflect upon the glory to which, after all his suffering, he is exalted in heaven, from whence he beholds his kingdom established upon earth.

PSALM XXIII.

This Psalm is full of consolation to true believers; and the desire of partaking in those precious advantages which are here described, should lead us zealously to apply ourselves to the study and practice of true piety.

In the *34th chapter of Ezekiel*, the Messiah is prophesied of as the shepherd of Israel, and our LORD applies this prophecy to himself; see *St. John's Gospel, chap. x.*

FIFTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXIV.

This Psalm appears to have been written by David to be sung when the Ark was carried up with great solemnity into the tabernacle upon Mount Sion; see *2 Samuel, chap. vi. and 1 Chron. chap. xv.* It is supposed to have been sung in parts, by two sets of singers, the first beginning with the three first verses, and the other answering in the three following; the first taking their turn in the seventh verse, and the other answering in part of the eighth. Who is this *King of glory?* then the former answering *the Lord, &c.* Then the first asking *Who is, &c.* and the second concluding with *the Lord of Hosts, &c.*

Ver. 3. *The hill of the Lord*, signified Mount Sion, where the tabernacle was placed. The holy place signifies the church of God upon earth. *Clean hands, ver. 4,* are hands free from murder, theft, and all kind of wicked actions. *A pure heart,* is a heart free from all wicked designs and desires, and purified by the Holy Spirit. *To lift up the soul to vanity,* signifies to set the heart upon the vanities of this world. *To swear deceitfully,* is to take a false oath. Blessing and righteousness from the LORD, *ver. 5,* signify mercy and forgiveness of sins. By *seeking the face of Jacob,* is to be understood desiring to be reckoned among the true Israelites, the people of God. By *lifting up the heads of the gates, ver. 7 and 9,* is only meant their being opened. The tabernacle was the earthly palace of the heavenly King; the Ark was his earthly throne in which he showed forth his glory to the people of Israel; taking the Ark into the tabernacle was therefore receiving *the King of glory into it.* The LORD is called *mighty in battle, ver. 8,* on account of the victories which king David and the people of Israel had gained through the power of the Almighty.

This Psalm teaches us what sort of persons God reckons as members of his church; if therefore we wish to be among the number we must examine ourselves, to see whether we have the proper qualifications of inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,

heaven, *clean hands*, &c. and to endeavour to improve in them continually. This Psalm may also be applied to the ascension of our blessed Saviour, when the heavens were opened to receive him, and it is one of the Psalms used upon Ascension-Day.

PSALM XXV.

This Psalm appears to have been written by king David during the time of some great distress; probably when Absalom rebelled against him. We learn here with what confidence those who trust in God apply to him and implore his assistance in all their necessities; and that what we ought most earnestly to pray for is, to be filled with the knowledge of God, to be taught by his word and his spirit to live according to his will and commandments, and to receive pardon for the sins we have committed.

Those who transgress without a cause, *ver. 1*, signify people who injure others without having reason to be offended with them. *The meek whom God will guide, ver. 9*, are people of humble patient minds. *By the secret of the Lord, ver. 14*, is understood the inward comforts of the Holy Ghost. *The LORD's covenant* means the covenant of salvation. *To pluck the feet out of the net, ver. 15*, signified being delivered from perplexity and trouble.

The instructions contained in this Psalm are of the greatest use and importance; and carefully reading and meditating upon these things, will strengthen us more and more in the fear of the LORD, and increase our trust in his mercy and goodness.

PSALM XXVI.

This Psalm shows the happy effects of a good conscience; but we must observe, that the Psalmist did not rely entirely on his own merits, for he declares his resolution to *wash his hands in innocency*, or to make use of the means of grace, that he might be justified or regarded as a just and righteous person in the sight of God, which as a Jew he could not be without offering

offering the sacrifices of the law. And, in order to be thus justified, Christians must partake of *both* the Sacraments which were ordained of Christ for their justification, *Baptism* and the *Supper of the LORD*.

The *habitation of God's house*, ver. 8, and the *place where his honour dwelleth*, signify the place in which God is worshipped by his faithful people. In David's time this was the tabernacle upon Mount Sion; in Christian countries every church is the house of God.

FIFTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXVII.

When David wrote this Psalm his mind was filled with that confidence and trust in God which proceeds from the Holy Spirit. This seems to have been bestowed as a reward for his having desired above all things to live always so as to be reckoned one of the members of the church. By the *Lord's pavilion*, ver. 5, the Psalmist means *God's particular providence* to the members of the church, and by *setting him up upon a rock*, he meant God's defending him from his enemies. Observe, that David resolved to show his thankfulness in the way God had appointed by offering sacrifices in the tabernacle; but before he did this, he prayed fervently to God to continue to guide and defend him.

This Psalm affords much good instruction, which Christians may apply to themselves. Those who truly serve God have no cause to fear what *man* can do unto them. If they are forsaken by all the world God will never forsake them; nothing but trust and hope in God's promises can support the mind under the various trials and afflictions of life, and all those who *wait upon him*, that is, submit to his good pleasure, the LORD will certainly comfort and relieve, and turn their sorrow into joy, either in this world or in that which is to come.

PSALM XXVIII.

The wicked, against whom David particularly prayed, were those nations which he was appointed as king of Israel to destroy, on account of their presumptuous wickedness in worshipping idols. But wicked people, in general, are guilty of the crime of *disregarding the works of the LORD and the operation of his hands*, which are clearly seen in the things he created, and in his providential care of them, which good people observe and are thankful for.

Ver. 1. By *the pit*, is meant the place to which the wicked go when they die. *God's holy oracle, ver. 2*, in David's time, was the *Mercy Seat* upon the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies, where the glory of the LORD appeared between the cherubim. The oracle of Christians is the throne of the LORD in heaven. Observe, *ver. 7*, that while David was offering up his pious and earnest supplication, he felt an inward assurance that his prayers were heard and accepted, and he brake out into praise and thanksgiving. In this manner God usually comforts and strengthens his faithful servants when they call upon him.

PSALM XXIX.

This Psalm should engage us to adore with reverence and fear the majesty of God, of which he gives so many proofs in his works. It teaches us, in particular, that God, by his power, produces the thunder which is heard in the air, and all the wonderful effects of a tempest, and that he makes use of them to exercise his power and show his greatness to mankind. But we should recollect, when we hear the thunders roar, and see the lightning fly, that in the midst of his judgments God remembers his faithful people, and will bless them with his peace.

SIXTH DAY: MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXX.

This religious song of thanksgiving is particularly suited to persons who have escaped from any danger. Even the best of men sometimes forget themselves, as David did in prosperity, *ver. 6*; but GOD makes use of adversity to produce in them a holy fear, to bring them to a sense of their duty, and to oblige them to have recourse to him; and then he is reconciled, and changes their sorrow into joy, and their complaints into songs of praise. This is a doctrine of general use, and deserves our most serious consideration. By *his glory, ver. 12*, the Psalmist meant his soul.

PSALM XXXI.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David after his escape to Keilah, when Saul, with his army, pursued him so closely in the wilderness of Maon. See *1 Samuel, xxiii. 26*. In *thy righteousness, ver. 1*, signifies in thy mercy, or thy goodness. *My spirit, ver. 5*, signifies my soul, my life. *Lying vanities*, signify the advice and directions which the heathen priests pretended to receive from their false gods, by which the people were greatly deceived. *Make thy face to shine, ver. 16*, signifies to show favour and give comfort. Observe, in particular, the Psalmist's advice in *ver. 23, 24*.

SIXTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXII.

This doctrinal Psalm teaches us that man's true happiness consists in the pardon of his sins, and in the purity of his conscience; and that this favour is obtained by a sincere confession of sin, and by truly turning to GOD. Observe, *ver. 10*, the threatenings against the wicked, through Jesus Christ. Observe, *ver. 1*, that *sin is covered* by the goodness of GOD, in not taking notice of it; but it is required of us to
confess,

confess, and not *dissemble and cloke it before the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father*. The man to whom the LORD *imputeth no sin*, *ver. 2*, is the repentant sinner who is pardoned for his Redeemer's sake. It appears, from *ver. 3*, that before the Psalmist made confession of his sins the weight of his sorrows consumed his bodily health. *Floods of great water*, *ver. 6*, signify great public troubles and calamities. By *songs of deliverance*, *ver. 7*, are meant hymns of praise to GOD for victory. Observe, *ver. 10*, the *threatening* of the LORD to sinners, and his *promise to the righteous*; for in this light may David's words be taken, as he wrote by divine inspiration. *Ver. 11*, the righteous have great cause for joy.

PSALM XXXIII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David after receiving some extraordinary benefit. Observe, that in the joy of his heart he calls upon all the righteous to praise GOD for having created the world, and for his wise government of all things. Take particular notice of *ver. 1, 5, 8*; also, *ver. 12*, in which the Psalmist points out the blessedness of a nation in having the LORD for their GOD, and being his chosen people. When David wrote, this blessedness belonged to the Israelites only, but all who are admitted as members of Christ's church now partake of it, and we should strive to keep it by fulfilling the conditions of the covenant into which we were taken at our baptism. *By the eye of the Lord*, *ver. 18*, we are to understand his providence, his watchful care. *Ver. 20, &c.* the true way to have GOD our friend is, to trust in him, to fear him, to pray earnestly and frequently for his mercy, and keep his commandments.

PSALM XXXIV.

When David wrote this Psalm of thanksgiving, he had experienced a great deliverance, *see 1 Sam. chap. xxi. ver. 10, &c.* Observe, how strongly he represents GOD's care and protection of his children, the advantages which the fear of GOD procures them, and the fatal lot of the wicked.

Nothing can be of greater use than to call to mind frequently the divine promises and the excellent lessons contained

in this Psalm, to which end we should frequently read it, or commit it to memory for our edification and comfort. Observe, in particular, *ver. 7*, which shews that angels are employed to watch over good people.

SEVENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXV.

We may collect in general from this Psalm that GOD defends good people ; that such as persecute the faithful are exposed to his vengeance ; and that it is the duty of the righteous to rejoice in GOD, when his glory is promoted by their deliverance. But we must not conclude from what David here says against his enemies, that we are allowed to wish ill to those who injure us, or to rejoice when any misfortune happens to them. We are to remember that the enemies to David were enemies to GOD himself ; and that David, as a Prophet, and one who had an express promise of the divine assistance, might denounce destruction against those who opposed him. But as Christians, we should rather imitate the conduct he before observed towards them, as described in *ver. 13, 14* ; for the laws of the Gospel require us to love all men, even those who hate us, to desire their good, and to pray for them, in conformity, to the example and precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PSALM XXXVI.

In this Psalm we have the character of the wicked and ungodly set in comparison with the mercy and goodness of GOD, by which it appears how far they are from being in the image of GOD, or bearing the least resemblance to him. Well might the Psalmist say, *ver. 7, how excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God !* and we should learn from him to put our trust in the providence of GOD, here called *the shadow of his wings*, because it shelters his creatures from the evil to which they are exposed.

The fatness of God's house and rivers of pleasure, ver. 8,
signify

signify the delights and comforts of religion, but particularly those which devout worshippers enjoy in the house of God. God is there called *the fountain of life*, ver. 9, because from him proceeds all life. *God's light*, in which we see light, signifies divine revelation, which proceeds from God, by which alone our minds are enlightened in respect to spiritual things. Observe, in ver. 12, the prophecy relating to the final fate of all the enemies of the Church of God. This Psalm may be considered as containing very precious promises.

SEVENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXVII.

It is a very common thing with good people, when they are weighed down by trouble and adversity, to compare their own situation with the prosperous state of many, who are notoriously wretched. This Psalm is designed to guard the servants of God against this fault; and it will effectually do so, if they lay hold of the divine promises conveyed in it, and follow the excellent choice it embraces. But let us remember what is said, ver. 38, and 39, which shew, that, strictly speaking, no man is *perfect* and *upright*; the salvation of the most righteous men upon earth comes to him, through faith in God, mercy by Jesus Christ. By the wicked, from whom the righteous shall be delivered, we may understand not only bad men, but wicked spirits.

EIGHTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXVIII.

This Psalm represents to us the sentiments of a penitent sinner, humbled under a sense of his sins, and the divine displeasure; and it affords most useful instruction and consolation for those who are afflicted with pains and diseases, or any other calamity. We are here taught by David's example, to look upon the evils that befall us in this world, however severe they may be, as the just correction of our sins;

to implore God's pardon for them, and to submit, with humility, patience, and meekness, to the chastisements of God, trusting in his goodness and mercy for a happy deliverance.

PSALM XXXIX.

Jeduthun, to whom this Psalm is addressed, was governor of the music in the Tabernacle. This Psalm contains excellent doctrine, which is, that the way never to fall into murmuring, nor to suffer ourselves to be tempted or offended, when we see the temporal prosperity of the wicked, is to represent to ourselves the shortness of our lives, the insignificance of the good things of this world, and the vanity of men's labours for earthly things. With such thoughts as these we may praise God, and rejoice in his favour and loving-kindness, both in prosperity and adversity.

By the fire that burned within him, ver. 3, the Psalmist meant the excess of his grief, which he could no longer keep to himself. *Lord, let me know my end, &c. ver. 5*. Observe, that David did not from vain curiosity desire to know how long he had to live, he only wished to have grace to reflect properly on the shortness of human life, that he might be prepared for death. *I was dumb and opened not my mouth, &c. ver. 2*, signified that David restrained himself from complaining, by considering that it was his duty to submit to the chastisements of God. *A stranger and a sojourner, ver. 12*, signifies one who is not a real owner of land, or a fixed inhabitant of any place. In this condition we all are as inhabitants of the present world, in heaven only can we hope to rest for ever.

PSALM XL.

In this Psalm David praises God, for the deliverances and favours he had received from his goodness, devotes himself to his service, and acknowledges that, by submission to the will of God, rather than for his sacrifices, he hoped to be accepted.

By a horrible pit, and miry clay, ver. 2, the Psalmist meant great affliction and perplexity. *The verses, 6, 7, 8,*
may

may possibly relate to David as a type of Christ, but they are applied by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, to our Saviour himself, whom we may suppose here prophetically speaking by the mouth of David, and declaring that the sacrifices of the law of Moses could not take away sin, but that he, the Messiah, would come himself and fulfil the will of God, by taking our nature upon him, and offering the proper sacrifice for the sins of the world.

EIGHTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XLI.

The promises in the beginning of this Psalm ought to inspire us with sentiments of charity and compassion for the distressed of our fellow-creatures, and lead us to do all in our power for their comfort and relief. What David says, on the latter part, of the treatment his enemies gave him, shews that it is a great sin to insult the miserable, to wish evil, or desire the death of any one, or to judge that all whom God afflicts are punished for their sins; for afflictions are often sent to good people, as trials of their virtue, to give them the opportunity of gaining a greater reward. Even our Saviour himself was treated as this Psalm describes, not only by the Jewish people in general, but by one he had made his familiar friend, Judas Iscariot.

PSALM XLII.

Maschil is supposed to have been the master of music, who instructed the sons of Korah. Observe, in the first verse of this Psalm, the earnest desire of the Psalmist to go again to the house of God, from which he was at that time kept away. Whoever reflects properly, must consider it as a blessing and a privilege to appear before God in the public assemblies of his faithful people, and to be edified by the company and example of godly men; and nothing will grieve them more than to be deprived of these comforts, and to hear the wicked impiously insult God, and scoff at the good man's trust in him.

It seems, from the latter part, that the Psalmist, when he wrote this Psalm, had been in extreme distress, and was ready to sink under the weight of his afflictions, but his faith and trust in God supported him.

The *hart* or *deer*, to which David compared himself, *ver. 1*, is of a remarkably thirsty nature; the comparison shews that the Psalmist's desire to go to the house of God was very earnest. *The deeps, water-spouts, waves, and billows, ver. 7*, signify great afflictions and perplexities. Observe, *ver. 5 and 11*, the question which the Psalmist put to himself, and the comfortable answer which his mind inspired by the Holy Spirit returned.

PSALM XLIII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by king David, when his son Absalom had risen in rebellion against him. Observe here, as in the Psalm before it, what a great sorrow it was to David, to be kept from the Tabernacle, and with what desire he looked forward, to the joy of going again to the altar of his God. How different is the behaviour of many who call themselves Christians; some never go at all to the house of God, others stay away on the most trifling pretences, and by far the greater part, both of rich and poor, never go to the altar of their God, the Holy Table, where that Holy Sacrament is administered, which he himself ordained for the perpetual remembrance of his death; and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

NINTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XLIV.

This Psalm was evidently composed at a time when the Israelites were under great affliction and persecution. On which occasion the Psalmist, writing for their use as well as his own, calls to mind the many signal blessings which God had in former times bestowed upon their church and nation, and acknowledges that their forefathers had become masters of Canaan, not by their own strength, but by the power of God,

to whom he ascribes the glory. The complaints which the Psalmist makes of the deplorable condition of the Israelitish nation, shews that in former times God sometimes suffered his chosen people to fall into the hands of the wicked, and to endure persecution. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, *chap. viii. ver. 36*, applies to Christians the *22d verse* of this Psalm. God permits those things for the trial of his church and the glory of his name; but though he suffers his faithful people to be afflicted, he never forgets them, nor forsakes his covenant, and is therefore always ready to hear and deliver them when they call upon him in time of need.

PSALM XLV.

This Psalm is supposed to have been made upon the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, but it properly relates to the union between Christ and his Church, which is typified in several parts of the New Testament by a marriage. Many expressions in it shew that it relates to a divine person, particularly *ver. 6, 7*, which St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, *chap. i. ver. 8, 9*, applies to our Saviour, and we should learn from it to honour our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of glory.

PSALM XLVI.

This is a Psalm of thanksgiving for the assistance God had granted his people, at a time when they had been attacked by several nations. We learn from hence that God is the protector of his church, and even when kings and nations, who are represented in this Psalm by roaring floods and torrents, are confederate against it, God renders all their fury useless, and powerfully delivers it. This the church has always experienced, and will do so to the end of time, which we should consider for our comfort, and the confirmation of our faith.

NINTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XLVII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been sung when the ark of the LORD was carried from the Tabernacle into Solomon's Temple, but it may be properly applied to our Saviour's ascension into heaven, therefore it is appointed to be read on Ascension day.

The words of this divine hymn should excite as to praise God, and to celebrate his glory with holy transports, and to reflect on the happiness which many nations of the earth, who were once heathens, now enjoy in being reckoned among the people of God.

PSALM XLVIII.

This Psalm appears to have been composed upon occasion of some great deliverance, which God had granted to the city of Zion and Jerusalem; but it may be made use of by every nation belonging to the church of Christ, particularly in times of rejoicing for national prosperity.

PSALM XLIX.

Observe, *ver.* 1, 2, to whom this Psalm is addressed. The general design of it is to shew, that the happiness of man does not consist in the riches and honours of the world; that those who place their glory and felicity in them are fools and madmen; and therefore we ought not to set our heart upon these things, neither should we fear or envy such as possess them; but put our whole trust in God alone, who can render happy, even after death, those who fear him, and put their whole trust in him. High and low ought to attend to, and meditate on these things as the Psalmist exhorts them, and all in general should learn to wean their affections from
this

this world, and seek their happiness solely in the love and favour of God. *Ver.* 13, shows that the Psalmist had been describing the thoughts of the wicked. Observe his own hope, *ver.* 15.

TENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM L.

This is one of the Prophetic Psalms. The first six verses relate to the day of judgement; the succeeding ones show the Jews that at that day they will not be judged for their neglect of the sacrifices and ceremonial observances of the law, but for their hypocrisy and other abominable crimes. This Psalm is particularly instructive to Christians, as it teaches that the service of God does not consist in mere outward performances and professions of religion, but that the worship which God particularly requires is, to *serve him in spirit and in truth*, to praise him, to call upon him, and to do his holy will; yet public worship is not to be omitted, for God has expressly commanded his people to assemble and meet together, men, women, and children, in the house of prayer. The last verse conveys a most comfortable promise.

PSALM LI.

This Psalm was written by king David after the commission of those sins in the matter of Uriah, for which he was so severely reproved by the prophet Nathan. It is called David's Penitential Psalm, and we see in it the character of a true penitent. To make his penitence and humiliation more public the king committed this Psalm to the chief musician, to be solemnly sung in the Tabernacle. This Psalm is of general use, for all men are more or less sinners, and stand in need of God's mercy and forgiveness; we should therefore particularly notice the words of it. The method David took in praying for the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is the only one by which sinners can obtain pardon for their sins, peace of conscience, and the renewal of God's grace.

To

To be deprived of the help of the Holy Spirit David justly regarded as the greatest misfortune that could befall him. This Psalm is commonly used by malefactors as they are going to execution.

PSALM LII.

David here denounces the judgments of God against one of Saul's counsellors, named Doeg, who, by his slanders, had exasperated Saul against him, and had occasioned the death of a great number of the priests, who were cruelly slain by the command of Saul; *see 1 Sam. chap. xxi. xxii.* But it may be considered as declaring God's threatenings to the wicked in general.

TENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LIII.

This Psalm varies very little from Psalm xiv. See the remarks on that Psalm.

PSALM LIV.

The event which gave occasion to this Psalm is recorded in the *1st Book of Samuel, chap. xxiii and xxvi.* We should learn from it to have recourse to prayer in time of danger, to place our trust and confidence in God, and to form good and pious resolutions.

PSALM LV.

The words of this Psalm show that David was in great distress when he penned it. From *ver. 12, 13, 14,* it seems to have been occasioned by hearing that Ahithophel, his friend and counsellor, had turned against him, and joined with his rebellious son Absalom to dispossess him of the kingdom. It certainly is a great trial to meet with treachery and unkindness from those we love, and such a case naturally calls
forth

forth bitter complaints. However, we must take care not to make an ill use of this Psalm, and some others which have expressions in them like those in *ver. 15*, by applying them to our enemies. Learned authors tell us, that this verse might have been translated from the Hebrew text, *Death will seize them, they will go down quick into hell*; and that it is a prophetic threatening instead of an imprecation: that in *ver. 19*, it might have been, *God will afflict them*; and, in *ver. 23*, thou O God *wilt* instead of *shalt*. Observe the comfortable promise in *ver. 22*.

ELEVENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LVI.

We have an account of the circumstance which gave occasion for this Psalm, *1 Samuel, chap. xxi. ver. 10, &c.* David could not well be in a more perilous situation than among the Philistines, whose hatred had been excited by his killing Goliath; but he had been driven away from the land of Israel by the cruelty of Saul, and knew not where to go to. In such a situation it was natural for him to be afraid; but observe, *ver. 3, 4*, what course he always took at such times. Observe, also, *ver. 10 to the end*, what comfortable hopes were given him. Such as these will be granted to all who, in times of danger, trust in the Almighty as David did.

PSALM LVII.

This Psalm relates to the history of David when, in the cave of Engedi, he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, and had a fair opportunity of taking away his life. See *1 Sam. chap. xxiv*.

Though we cannot apply to ourselves all that we read in this Psalm, we may conclude from it that in our necessities we should follow the Psalmist's example, and commit ourselves to the providence of God, who will not fail to help and deliver us if we steadfastly keep to our duty. We may also learn from it to praise the Lord after we have had deliverance from any kind of danger or distress.

Ver.

Ver. 1. The shadow of thy wings, means the kind providence of God, by which he shelters his faithful people from the power of their enemies. Our Saviour used the same allusion when he wept over Jerusalem; see *Matthew, chap. xxiii. ver. 37, How often would I have gathered thy children, &c.*

Ver. 4. By lions, the Psalmist meant cruel and violent men.

PSALM LVIII.

In this Psalm David appears to have been inspired to describe the character of the rulers and judges of the heathen nations, whom he calls *the sons of men*, to distinguish them from the Israelites, who were the *people of God*. Observe, what he says of these people in the first five verses, and then you will see *why* they were to have such heavy judgments sent upon them for their destruction. You are not to consider the expressions *break their teeth, O God, &c.* as David's private wishes, but only as the *threatenings* of the Almighty against the heathens, who in those days set up their abominable idols, which were, in fact, *devils*, against the LORD GOD. Every *righteous person* had reason to rejoice when these wicked wretches were destroyed, because their great delight was to put them to death for being the faithful servants of the true God.

ELEVENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LIX.

The occasion of this Psalm is related in the 19th chapter of the 1st Book of Samuel. What David said in this Psalm against his enemies was not spoken out of a principle of hatred or revenge; but, being persecuted unjustly, and his cause being that of God himself, he might, as a prophet, denounce the divine judgements against them. Christians are to behave with meekness when they are treated with malice, cruelty, and injustice; to return good for evil, and wait with patience for the divine assistance.

PSALM LX.

The particulars to which this Psalm refers are related in the Books of Samuel and Chronicles. See 2 Sam. chap. viii. ver. 3, 5, and 1 Chron. chap. xviii. ver. 5, 6, 7.

David here celebrates the power and goodness of God, and shows that the strength and help of men are but vanity, and that there is none but the LORD who can deliver us out of distress, and in whom we can safely trust.

PSALM LXI.

In this Psalm David, in a season of distress, has recourse to prayer. Observe, what strong confidence he expressed in the help of the Almighty, and that it was founded upon former instances of mercy and goodness. The resolution he declared, ver. 4, signified that he would never forsake the established worship of God, but depend upon the divine protection as a member of the Church. The *heritage*, ver. 5, signified the blessings which God had promised to those who should obey his holy laws. Ver. 6, 7, show that the Psalmist looked forward to a life of happiness beyond the grave, as every pious Christian will do.

TWELFTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXII.

Observe, in this Psalm, David's perfect confidence in God, and remember his advice, ver. 8. Consider, also, what he says, ver. 9 to the end, which teaches us, that it is in vain for any, whether of high or low degree, to set themselves up against the power of God.

PSALM LXIII.

When David wrote this Psalm he was in the wilderness of Judea, and exposed to the persecutions of king Saul; see 1 Sam. chap. xxii. xxiii; he was of course prevented from going to worship at the temple of the LORD.

Observe, ver. 1, 2, what a privilege he esteemed it, and how

how earnestly he desired to have it in his power to go to the *sanctuary*, that is, the *house of God*; and that while he was obliged to stay away, he did the best he could by meditating on divine things in *the night*, the only time he had, perhaps, for this holy exercise, as people were coming continually to join him. Remember that it is as great a blessing and privilege to every Christian as it was to David to go to the house of God; yet how many, who have it in their power to attend constantly, neglect it! And how many others, servants in particular, enter into situations where they may be sure they shall be deprived of the opportunity of going to church, without the least thought or concern about it, which is exposing themselves to great temptation.

PSALM LXIV.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David when he was fallen into disgrace with Saul, and had departed from his court. He had certainly great reason to think many schemes would be laid for his destruction. Observe, *ver. 3*, to what he compares those bitter words which often wound a person's character, and enrage his enemies against him when he is far away. And take notice; *ver. 7, 8*, that God often turns these weapons, namely, *bitter words*, by which they mean to destroy others, upon those that utter them, so as to hurt their own characters, and sometimes bring them to shame and death. Observe, *ver. 9, 10*, what we should do when we see these things, namely, fear and praise God, and place our whole trust and confidence in him.

TWELFTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXV.

This Psalm has two parts. In the first, *ver. 1 to 5*, David speaks of the spiritual blessings granted unto those that worshipped God in Sion, that is, Jerusalem; and in the second, *ver. 5 to the end*, of the temporal blessings which God bestowed upon the Israelites, and particularly the fruitfulness of the land of Canaan. *Ver. 2*, *all flesh*, signifies all mankind. *Ver. 4*, *the man whom thou chooseth*, &c. means a priest, or minister,

minister, of God's house. *Ver. 9, the river of God*, signifies the clouds from which the earth is watered. *Ver. 11, thou crownest the year*, signifies that God adorneth the earth with a variety of fruits. *Thy paths drop fatness*, signifies that God causes plenty by means of the showers of rain. *Ver. 12, the little hills rejoice*, mean that the inhabitants of those places rejoice at the sight of the plenty bestowed by the goodness of God. These reflections of the Psalmist are suitable to Christians, and are such as they should call to mind when they behold the beauty and plenty which covers the face of the earth in the spring and summer season.

PSALM LXVI.

In this Psalm David reflects upon the power and greatness of God, of which he had himself seen such wonderful displays in the judgements sent upon the heathen nations. *Ver. 4* contains a prophecy which will hereafter be fulfilled. *Ver. 7* shows that though the heathens have not the knowledge of the true God, he ruleth over them all. *Ver. 13, 14, 15*, observe that David resolved to show his thankfulness for God's mercies to himself by offering the sacrifices of the law, which related to the great sacrifice which the Redeemer was to make at a future time; and remember that, instead of these sacrifices, Christians have the *Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER*, in which they commemorate the death of the Redeemer.

Observe, *ver. 18, 19*, that God does not receive the prayers of the wicked, and that if we desire he should hear us we must be upright and sincere before him; and that we should have a constant regard to the promoting his honour and glory. If we do this, God will accept our prayers as he did David's.

PSALM LXVII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been composed by David when, being settled in the throne, and having brought the Ark to Jerusalem and offered sacrifices, &c. as he promised in the 66th Psalm, *ver. 15*, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, as he is said to have done, 2 Sam. chap. vi. *ver. 17, 18*; but it is likewise prophetic of the second coming of the Messiah, and the full establishment of the Gospel. As

a prayer

a prayer this Psalm suits Christian nations still better than it did that of the Jews, because the former have been enlightened with the knowledge of God, and enriched with his blessing through Christ.

THIRTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXVIII.

This Psalm, which was sung when the Ark of the Covenant was removed to Jerusalem, is partly prophetical, and contains several things that relate to Christ and his kingdom. We learn from it in general that God has in all times displayed his power in favour of his people by protecting them against their enemies, and showering down his mercies upon them. There are two remarkable prophecies in this Psalm, one in *ver.* 18, the other in *ver.* 31, 32. The first of these prophecies was accomplished when our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, as St. Paul shows in the *fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians*; and the second was in part fulfilled when several heathen nations were converted to Christianity; but it will have a fuller and more perfect accomplishment at our Saviour's second coming.

Observe, *ver.* 1, that these are the words which Moses had directed the priests to use at the removing of the Ark; see *Numbers*, x. 35. *Ver.* 4, *his name JAH*; this is the same as JEHOVAH, the name of the *only true God*. *Ver.* 7, namely, in the pillar of the cloud when they were delivered out of Egypt. *Ver.* 22, *kings with their armies*, namely, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan. *They of the household*, the children of God's family, the Israelites. *Ver.* 15, *the hill of God*, Mount Sion. *Ver.* 16, *the hills leaping*, signifies the rejoicing of the people that dwell upon them. *Ver.* 18, *thou hast ascended up on high*, &c. alluding, in the first place, to the situation of the Ark of God, which was placed in a triumphant manner on Mount Sion; in the second, foretelling the ascension of our blessed Saviour. *Ver.* 24, &c. describe the solemn introduction of the Ark into the tabernacle prepared for it, on which occasion all the tribes attended.

Ver. 31. Princes shall come, &c. This was partly fulfilled in the time of king Solomon, and afterwards by the conversion of heathen kings to Christianity; but it will have a further fulfilment hereafter at Christ's second coming.

THIRTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXIX.

When David wrote this Psalm he was under some very great affliction, and in a most deplorable condition, exposed to the hatred and contempt of the heathen on account of his zeal for religion. By *deep waters* and *floods*, he meant *great troubles*; but his prayers and thanksgivings show that he still trusted in God. In respect to these sufferings David was a type of our blessed Redeemer, to whom the prophecies in *ver. 20, 21*, evidently related, for they were fulfilled at our Saviour's crucifixion. Indeed the whole Psalm may be applied to our Saviour, in his human nature, excepting that *he* suffered for *mankind*, David for his own sins and follies. *Ver. 22 to 29*, are to be considered as *prophetic threatenings* against the enemies of CHRIST. *Ver. 32 to the end*, may be regarded as *prophetic promises* that God would preserve his church; for the word *SION* in the Psalms usually signifies the church of God.

PSALM LXX.

This Psalm also relates to the church of God. David's prayer is not for the destruction of his private enemies, but for that of the wicked, who set themselves presumptuously against the true God. Observe, *ver. 4*, which reminds us that good people in affliction have great cause for rejoicing, which the wicked cannot have in the height of prosperity.

FOURTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXI.

King David composed this Psalm in his old age; probably at the time of Absalom's rebellion. It shows that he preserved his confidence in God under all the various troubles and difficulties which he had had to encounter; and that Satan, the enemy of souls, had not been suffered to prevail to his destruction, though he had sometimes tempted him to commit great sins. Observe, how full of hope David's soul was at the time he wrote this Psalm; and thus it will ever be with those who are conscious that they have endeavoured to conform their lives to the will of God.

PSALM LXXII.

This Psalm was composed by David upon Solomon's being anointed to be his successor in the kingdom; *see 1 Kings, chap. i.* In the four first verses he recommends his son to God, and foretells the prosperity of his kingdom; he is then led by the spirit of prophecy to speak of the kingdom of the Messiah, to which the remaining verses relate; we must therefore apply them to the latter times of the Gospel when *the whole earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD.* This is what we pray for in the *Lord's Prayer*, when we say, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Those which follow are a collection of the Psalms of Asaph, and other holy men; but there are some of David's among them which were found after the above mentioned collection was first published.

FOURTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXIII.

This Psalm teaches us how to judge of the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous. We ought never to believe that wicked men who live in mirth and
 plenty

plenty in this world, and who enjoy all their wishes, are truly happy; or that the righteous, because they are afflicted, serve God in vain; for this is a very dangerous temptation, as this Psalm shows us; and if we also consider what the Gospel has taught us concerning the condition of good and bad men after this life our faith will never be staggered either at the flourishing state of the ungodly, or the sufferings of the righteous; but instead of being tempted to forsake the Lord, we shall cleave to him more and more, trusting in his good promises. *Ver. 17, the sanctuary of God*, meant the house of God where he heard these things explained. The same may now be learnt from the Holy Scriptures.

PSALM LXXIV.

The sad occasion of this Psalm was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. It describes the deplorable state to which the Jews were reduced in their captivity, by being deprived of the tokens of the covenant of God and of his divine favour. Such darkness should we of this nation be in if the enemies of the church should be permitted, for our sins, to prevail against us. We should therefore take warning by the fate of the Jews, and keep God's commandments, statutes, and ordinances.

FIFTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXV.

This Psalm appears to be written as a kind of dialogue, in which sometimes God is supposed to be the speaker, and sometimes the prophet, viz. *ver. 1*, the prophet; *ver. 2 to 8*, the Deity; *ver. 9*, the prophet; *ver. 10*, the Deity. This shows that the Psalmist was divinely inspired.

Ver. 4. The word *horn*, signifies *governor*. Such persons used to be distinguished by wearing on their heads a silver or gold ornament called a *horn*.

Ver. 8. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, &c.* A *cup* is commonly used in Scripture as an emblem of God's judgments, but it is sometimes applied to blessings. A *stiff neck* signifies

signifies obstinate wickedness. We should learn from this Psalm to give thanks and praise to God as the great ruler of all nations.

PSALM LXXVI.

This is a song of thanksgiving for some great victory which God had vouchsafed to his people, probably in the destruction of Senacherib's army; *see 2 Kings, chap. xix.* We have here a magnificent description of the power which God displayed in behalf of his church and people, from whence we may conclude that, as God is always the same, he will do for his church as he has hitherto done; therefore, if such dangers as threatened the Jewish nation in Hezekiah's time, threaten us, we need not fear either the wrath, or the power of men, for God can check the one and defeat the other; and he will certainly help and disappoint the enemy if our ways and our doings are agreeable to his will and commandments. *Ver. 11* shows how we should act on these occasions. The vow we should make ought to be the renewal of the vow made at our baptism; and the place to make it is the *Holy Table of the LORD.*

PSALM LXXVII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by one of the house of Asaph, in the time of the Babylonish captivity, the misery and length of which, he here bemoans. Observe, *ver. 3 to 10*, what thoughts arose in the Psalmist's mind when he called to remembrance the calamities he had felt and witnessed, which led him almost to doubt the providence of God; but recollecting how wrong it was for a weak mortal to call in question the tender mercies of God, his thoughts took a different turn, *ver. 10*, and all appeared to him, in respect to God's dealings, just and right.

Those who pass through severe trials may learn from hence not to sink under their afflictions, and Christians should also reflect on God's love manifested in the blessings of Redemption.

FIFTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXVIII.

Observe, that this historical Psalm is a short history of the favours which God had granted to the people of Israel, of their various sins, and of the punishments inflicted upon them by God, and in particular of what befel them when they were conquered by the Philistines in the time of Eli the high priest. The history begins at the departure of Israel from Egypt, and reaches to the reign of king David, at which time the Ark was brought from Kirjathjearim to Jerusalem where the service of God was afterwards established. Christians should learn from this Psalm to reflect on the wonderful history of the Israelites, as the people of God, and to keep true to their covenant, as the Jews brought so many heavy judgments upon themselves by breaking theirs.

SIXTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXIX.

This Psalm describes the extreme desolation to which the Israelites were reduced by provoking God's judgments. This is a very proper Psalm to be used in Christian worship in the time of public calamity, excepting *ver. 5, 6*, which related to the heathens who fought against Israel.

PSALM LXXX.

This Psalm relates to the judgments which God had sent upon the Israelites for their sins, and the state of the church in consequence of them. Observe, *ver. 1*, that the Psalmist addresses God as *the shepherd of Israel*. Compare this with *John, chap. x.* in which our Saviour calls himself the good shepherd. In *ver. 8, &c.* the church of God is compared to a vine taken from one place and transplanted to another. This alludes to God's bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, and settling them in the land of Canaan. *Her hedges, ver. 12,*

signified the strong holds and fenced cities of Israel. Observe, *ver.* 13, how earnestly the Psalmist prayed for the restoration of the church; and call to mind the sad condition of many nations at this present time in respect to religion; and form a resolution to keep true to God, and not go back from following his commandments, but repent truly of all you have done amiss, and do all you can to contribute to the righteousness of the nation you belong to.

PSALM LXXXI.

This Psalm was composed to be sung at the *Feast of Trumpets*; see *Leviticus*, chap. xxiii. *ver.* 24; and it is still made use of by the Jews in their liturgy upon this occasion. It is in the dialogue form: to the 6th *verse* the people sing the praises of God; in the remaining verses God is supposed to answer. We should learn from it as Christians to praise God, and to pay him homage in the most solemn manner, for he has done much greater things for us through Jesus Christ, than had been done for the Jews at the time it was written. Observe, *ver.* 13, the great love of God for his people, and that if they had not refused to hearken to him, and chose to follow their own hearts' desire, he would not have given them up, as they provoked him to do by their abominable wickedness.

SIXTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXII

This Psalm was an exhortation to some of the magistrates in the land of Israel who had been negligent of their duty. They were called *Gods*, because they ruled by the power of God.

PSALM LXXXIII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written in the time of king Jehoshaphat, against whom there came a combination of such powerful enemies as are here mentioned; see *2 Chronicles*, chap. xxi. The imprecations, *ver.* 9 to the end, were denounced

denounced against the enemies of the Lord; and *ver.* 18 shows *why* the Psalmist expressed such wishes.

PSALM LXXXIV.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by king David, and it bears strong marks of his zeal and fervour; but upon what occasion he composed it cannot be known; he was frequently so circumstanced that he could not go to the Tabernacle. Observe, *ver.* 1, 2, how earnestly he desired to be restored to the worship of God at Jerusalem, which shows that he was very far from considering it as a matter of no consequence *where* he worshipped, or in what *form*; his desire was to worship God in his own appointed way. By dwelling in God's house, *ver.* 4, may be understood having free access to the place consecrated for public worship. How happy are we of this nation in the enjoyment of this privilege.

Ver. 6. *The valley of Baca* was called *the valley of weeping*, because it lay in a very uncomfortable road for travellers in their way to Jerusalem. It is here put for *the troubles of life*. Those who passed through the valley with cheerfulness and good humour, made it pleasant to themselves and those who travelled with them. In like manner, those who bear with patience the sorrows which God sees fit to send upon them in this world of trial, do good to their own souls, and go on from strength to strength, through the refreshment they receive by the SPIRIT OF GOD, which is often expressed in Scripture by the emblem of water. Observe, *ver.* 10, what the Psalmist says, and the divine promises for as such they may be regarded, being written by the inspiration of God in *ver.* 11, 12.

PSALM LXXXV.

This Psalm appears to have been composed by Ezra the scribe after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, but the latter part seems to refer to the times of the Gospel.

SEVENTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXVI.

The Psalm seems to have been composed by David during his affliction under Saul. It was afterwards, as the Jews relate, used by Hezekiah when the Assyrians made their first attempt upon Jerusalem, but it agrees best with David's history. It will be found very applicable to Christians in times of distress.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The Psalmist here describes the glory of Jerusalem and Mount Sion, and foretells as a prophet that all the nations of the earth would admire its glory, and the happiness of God's people, and desire to be partakers with them; but it is still better suited to the glorious state in which the Christian church will be hereafter.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

Either the Prophet who composed this Psalm was in the deepest affliction, and almost deprived of consolation, or it is prophetic of the sufferings of Christ. It should lead those who are in affliction to reflect that the best men, and the Son of God himself, have undergone the like trials, which should keep up their courage, and make them resolve to wait with patience for the deliverance which God will certainly send them in his own good time.

SEVENTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXIX.

The former part of this Psalm, as far as the *38th verse*, relates to the covenant which the LORD made with David; see *2 Samuel, chap. vii. ver. 12 to 17*. The latter part, from *ver. 37*, shows that the king who was at that time upon the throne

throne of David, and his people were suffering under some great calamity. It was probably written by Ethan the Ezrahite, after the division of Solomon's kingdom, in the time of Rehoboam. *Ver. 2* shows that the writer of this Psalm regarded the covenant, here alluded to, as relating to a kingdom that should be established *in the heavens*; namely, the Messiah's kingdom, over which David reigned as a type of Christ. The reading of this Psalm should animate us with a holy zeal to declare the loving kindness of the Lord, his power, and faithfulness, which appear in the creation and government of the world, and in the wonders he has done, not only for the children of Israel, but also in behalf of the Christian church. We should likewise remember that the covenant which God made with David, by which he engaged to establish his throne and his posterity for ever, related to the Messiah, and that they have already been in part fulfilled by the bringing in of Christ's kingdom upon earth, and will be completed by the universal establishment of it hereafter.

EIGHTEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XC.

This is called in the title of the Psalm *the Song of Moses the Man of God*; but at what time it was composed is not known. We are here taught that the knowledge we have of the shortness of this life ought to lead us to apply our hearts to learn true wisdom, which consists in the fear of God and keeping his commandments. It is one of the Psalms in the Burial Service. Observe, in particular, *ver. 12*. The *wisdom* here meant is *religion*.

PSALM XCI.

This Psalm gives an excellent description of the protection with which the LORD favours those who fear him and trust in him, and of the blessings he bestows upon them. *Ver. 1*, *the secret place of the most high*, signifies the church of God. *To dwell in it*, means to keep to the true religion. *To abide*
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under the shadow of the Almighty, means to be protected by him. *The snare of the fowler*, ver. 3, means the arts of Satan. In the 4th verse, the providence of God is represented under a figure used afterwards by our Saviour. "*How often,*" said our blessed LORD, "*would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!*" see *Matthew*, xxiii. ver. 37. *The shield and buckler*, were parts of armour by which the bodies of warriors were defended from the arrows of their enemy in battle. Whoever the Almighty is pleased to protect and preserve is safe from harm at all times, and in all situations, even in the midst of a battle, or in a *pestilence*, usually called the plague. This Psalm teaches us how happy those are who trust in God and draw near to him. The glorious privileges mentioned, and the promises here conveyed should fill the faithful people of God with unspeakable joy and unshaken confidence. But this Psalm related in a more particular manner to our blessed Saviour, and we read in the New Testament that the Devil tried to make the promises in it snares to tempt our Lord to act contrary to the will of his heavenly father; see *Matt. chap. iii.* but he could not deceive him.

PSALM XCII.

This Psalm was to be recited on the sabbath-day. From the words of the first verse we should be animated with an holy zeal to the diligent, chearful, and earnest discharge of a duty so just and reasonable as that of praising God. This we shall be ready to do if we seriously consider the wonderful works of God, and, above all, if we attend to his dealings with good and bad men, how he helps the one and punishes the other. The instruments, mentioned ver. 3, were always used in the Temple service at Jerusalem; and in many Christian churches there are organs, which are great helps to devotion when people mind properly what they are about; but very often they attend only to the music, as an amusement, which is a great profanation of the Lord's house and his holy worship. They should *sing to the praise and glory of God*, as the clerk calls upon them to do.

EIGHTEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCIII.

In this Psalm the writer celebrates the greatness of God and the sovereign power by which he ruleth over all things, and particularly over his people which should be the frequent subject of our meditation. *Ver. 3, the floods*, signify multitudes of enemies. *Ver. 5, thy testimonies*, mean the ordinances of God given as pledges of his covenant: these testimonies, under the Christian covenant, are, the two Sacraments of BAPTISM and the SUPPER OF THE LORD. It is by means of these alone that we can be holy.

PSALM XCIV.

What we should remark in this Psalm is the description which the Psalmist gives of the wicked and ungodly who blaspheme God, saying at the very time they are committing the worst of crimes that the LORD does not see them nor will punish them. Good people abhor such impious thoughts, for they are firmly persuaded that God, who created men, knows all their actions, all their words, and all their thoughts, and that he will be their judge. We further learn from this Psalm, *ver. 12*, the usefulness of God's corrections, and that God constantly sustains his faithful servants. *Ver. 19, 20*, allude to the comforts of the HOLY SPIRIT, which delight the soul even in the midst of sorrow and trouble.

NINETEENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XCV.

This Psalm engages us to two duties: the first is to render to God with an holy joy and fervency, the worship and praises which are due to his divine power and majesty: the second is to improve the exhortations which the Psalmist (supposed to be David), gave to the Israelites not to harden their hearts as their fathers had done in the wilderness.

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These words concern Christians, as St. Paul observes in the 3^d and 4th chapter of his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, for if we provoke GOD to cast us off we shall never enter into the rest prepared for the people of GOD in heaven.

PSALM XCVI.

In this Psalm, which was composed by David, upon removing the Ark to Mount Sion; see 1 *Chron. chap. xvi.* he invited the Israelites and all people to bless the LORD, to call upon him, and worship him as the only true GOD, to celebrate his power, and submit with joy to his government; and it is very suitable to Christian worship, for we have the same LORD for our GOD. *Ver. 7,* we of this kingdom are among *the kindreds of the people*, who have cause to ascribe goodness and strength to the Lord, since it was by these our nation, which was once an heathen one, was delivered from the power and dominion of Satan, and added to the church of Christ. *Ver. 8,* the offering we should bring when we go into the courts of the LORD is that of a devout, contrite, and thankful heart. *Ver. 9,* to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, is to go to his house, and behave there as we ought to do in the presence of a holy GOD, with fear and reverence, and holy joy.

PSALM XCVII.

This Psalm is prophetic of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, and the total destruction of idolatry and impiety, and it affords excellent promises of glory and happiness to those that fear God and serve him truly. Observe, in particular, *ver. 11.*

NINETEENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCVIII.

This Psalm also regards Christians, as it relates to the kingdom of Christ, and to those happy times when Christ will reign visibly over all the nations of the earth, for which we should endeavour to prepare ourselves by leading good and religious lives.

PSALM XCIX.

This Psalm was designed to celebrate the majesty of God and the glory of his kingdom. It likewise mentions the mercies God had shown in the days of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. We learn from it that it is the duty of those who have the happiness to know God, and to be the subjects of his kingdom, to fear him, to reverence his divine majesty, and to worship him with the most profound humility.

PSALM C.

This is a Psalm of praise, or a form of thanksgiving, used at the peace-offering mentioned *Leviticus, chap. vii. ver. 13*. It teaches us that we ought to pray that all the nations of the world may worship the LORD. That if we desire to serve God in an acceptable manner we must do it not with our lips only, but with a holy joy in our hearts; and that we must constantly remember God is our Creator and Preserver, especially when we enter into a place of public worship, that we may be properly prepared to join with the congregation in blessing and praising him.

PSALM CI.

This Psalm appears to have been made by David, at his first coming to the throne, whilst he reigned only at Hebron; see *2 Sam. chap. ii*. He here lays down some very wise and pious resolutions to be observed by him in the government of his kingdom; and his history shows that he followed them afterwards. The same kind of resolutions every master or father of a family should make, excepting that the last verse suited David only, as the king of Israel.

TWENTIETH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CII.

This Psalm was probably written by Nehemiah in the time of the Babylonish captivity, for the use of himself, and other pious persons, who lamented the desolation of Jerusalem

tem and the ruin of the Temple, though at the same time they had comfortable hopes that they should soon be restored to their own land, and that all nations would, as formerly, admire the happiness of Sion. *Ver. 26 to the end*, contain a prophecy respecting the eternity of Christ's kingdom, and a glorious promise to the members of his church. The ancient Jews firmly trusted that God would arise and take pity upon Sion, and restore it to a happy state; and that he would, by delivering the Jews from captivity, manifest his glory to all the kingdoms of the earth; and Christians ought to believe that God will establish Christ's glorious kingdom hereafter; for this will certainly be brought to pass by the infinite power of our blessed Redeemer who is God *over all, blessed for evermore*. See *Romans*, ix. 5.

PSALM CIII.

This is a Psalm of praise, supposed to have been written by David, upon his recovery from a dangerous sickness. It is one of the most excellent thanksgivings in the whole Book of Psalms. The Psalmist here teaches us, by his own example, to bless God, not only with our mouth, but with our whole heart and soul; to cherish the remembrance of his mercies, and to take delight in rehearsing them, and in praising him continually. It also appears from this Psalm that we must not only praise God ourselves, but earnestly desire with David that he may be praised by men and angels, and by all creatures. *Ver. 20 to the end*. Observe, that David did not worship the angels, but lifted up his soul towards heaven, and called upon the angels to praise the LORD, as they were better qualified to do so than himself, a weak mortal.

TWENTIETH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CIV.

The design of this Psalm is to teach us to praise God for his marvellous works; and to this end to consider with great attention the wonders which the world presents to our view, the many different creatures it contains, and which we see in the heavens, in the air, upon the earth, and in the waters; the

the regular and wonderful order that reigns among them; the manner in which God preserves and governs them, and the care which he takes of all his creatures, but particularly of man. Surely, no one can reflect upon these things without feeling gratitude to God; and this Psalm furnishes words to express it in.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CV.

This Psalm, it is supposed, was first made by David for the daily service of God in the Tabernacle, in order to keep up the remembrance of all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation, from the days of Abraham to their taking possession of the land of Canaan. Though the events here related do not directly regard Christians, yet we ought to preserve the remembrance of them, because they afford matter for the most edifying and instructive meditations. But it is our duty, above all, to take occasion from what is contained in this Psalm, to raise our thoughts to those signal mercies and spiritual blessings which God has communicated to us, by making with us a *new covenant* through Jesus Christ, by which we are delivered from the captivity of sin, and received into his church, and by which, if it be not our own fault, we shall finally be admitted into heaven. Observe, in particular, *ver. 4, 5.*

TWENTY-FIRST DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVI.

As the former Psalm gives an account of the mercies of God to the Israelites, this is a relation and confession of their murmurings, and of the sins they fell into after their departure out of Egypt, both in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan. We see here, likewise, the several chastisements with which the Lord visited his people, and the marks he gave of his goodness in supporting and delivering them on many occasions. We should learn from this Psalm,

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on the one hand, not to imitate the ingratitude and infidelity of the people of Israel, since God has conferred infinitely greater mercies upon us than on them; and on the other to acknowledge and confess our sins before God, when we have offended him, to make a religious use of his chastisements, and to be fearful of drawing new ones upon ourselves by hardness of heart. This Psalm abounds with proofs that God is full of compassion and mercy, even towards those who have greatly offended him; and that he is ever ready to pardon those who grow better by his corrections, and to make them happy, which is a great encouragement to repentance and amendment of life. *Ver. 7.* At the borders of the sea; *see Exodus, xiv. ver. 11, 12.* *Ver. 13.* Soon forget his works, &c.; *Exodus, xv. ver. 22, 24.* *Ver. 14.* But lusted exceedingly; *Numbers, xi. ver. 4, 5, &c.* *Ver. 16.* Envied Moses, &c.; *Numbers, xvi. ver. 3, &c.* *Ver. 19.* They made a calf in Horeb, &c.; *Exodus, xx. ver. 18.* *Ver. 28.* Baal-peor, &c. the idol of the Moabites. Sacrifices of the dead. Dead warriors whom the heathen worshipped. *Ver. 32.* At the waters, &c.; *Numbers, xx. ver. 3, 13.* *Ver. 35.* They mingled among the heathen; *see Joshua, chap. xxiii. ver. 7, &c.* *Ver. 37.* Sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils. To Moloch the idol of the Ammonites, &c.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CVII.

The design of this Psalm is to show that God suffers men to be exposed to various trials and dangers, to give them opportunities of testifying their fear and love of him; and that they may, as it is their duty to do, celebrate his praises, and thus gain the blessings he has promised to his faithful servants. The example which the Psalmist gives, should lead us to reflect seriously upon what happens in the world, and especially to ourselves, that we may *praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.* Observe the *last verse* in particular.

TWENTY SECOND DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVIII.

In this Psalm David praises God with great zeal, and implores the divine assistance. David likewise expresses a strong confidence that he should reign over the whole land of Israel, and that he should be victorious over the Moabites, Edomites, and all those who opposed him, which actually came to pass.

PSALM CIX.

We may learn, in general, from this Psalm that as God protects good men, his curse commonly pursues the wicked, and chiefly those who are cruel and hard hearted, who injure and oppress the innocent; and that the evil which these people have done, or wished to others, often falls upon themselves; but great care must be taken not to pervert the meaning of this Psalm by supposing that Christians are at any time allowed to wish that the vengeance of God may fall upon those who hate or injure them. David spake as a prophet, and foretold the destruction of the enemies of the church; to his own private enemies, as he shows, *ver. 4*, he returned good for evil. What is here said, therefore, must be applied only to the enemies of God, to presumptuous sinners and apostates, such as Judas Iscariot, to whom some of the words of this Psalm are applied by St. Peter; *see Acts, chap. i. ver. 20*. Christ has commanded us to hate no man, but to love and pray for our greatest enemies, and do them all the good in our power; *see Matthew, chap. v. ver. 44, &c.*

TWENTY-THIRD DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CX.

We learn from the New Testament that this Psalm relates to the Messiah, *see Matthew, chap. xxii. ver. 43 to the end*; also, *Acts, xxi. 34. 1 Cor. xv. 25*; and it describes the divine dignity of the person, and the nature of his kingdom, which is

spiritual and heavenly; the supreme glory to which God would exalt him, and the powers by which he would establish his empire in the total destruction of his enemies. Observe, *ver. 4*, that the prophet foretold, by the HOLY SPIRIT, that the MESSIAH should be not only a powerful king, but also a high priest, and atone for the sins of the world. In this manner St. Paul explains the passage in the *7th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews*. This Psalm also instructs us that those who are the subjects of this glorious king should serve him willingly, and obey him joyfully; and our Saviour's applying this Psalm to himself, and the references made to it by St. Peter and St. Paul, should strengthen our belief that our Lord JESUS CHRIST will one day reign over the faithful and destroy all his enemies, and put an end to death.

PSALM CXI.

The Psalmist here praises God on account of his wonderful works, but particularly for the fulfilment of his covenant with his people Israel, by the temporal and spiritual blessings he graciously bestowed upon them. But we should call to mind the greater blessings promised by the Christian covenant to those who perform the conditions of it; and remember that God has sent *us* redemption, and that as surely as he fulfilled his former covenant with the Jews, so surely will he fulfil that into which every Christian is admitted at his baptism. What that is the Church Catechism explains at the beginning of it.

PSALM CXII.

This Psalm contains the character of a truly godly person, and of the happiness promised to such an one. By the covenant with the Jews, as the chosen people of the Lord, they were promised those great temporal blessings which are named in this Psalm, *ver. 1, 2*, if they kept the commandments of the Lord; and very frequently the same kind of blessings are bestowed upon good Christians. We are not however to regard it as any mark of God's displeasure, or any breach of his covenant, if they have them not; because temporal blessings make no part of the Christian covenant; *that* relates to better things than this world can give, namely, spiritual

spiritual blessings here, and everlasting life and happiness hereafter. Instead of desiring therefore to be *mighty upon earth*, we must desire to be *happy in heaven*; and the enemies we should desire to be defended against, are our spiritual enemies, *the world, the flesh, and the devil*.

PSALM CXIII.

This is a Psalm of praise, and an exhortation to acknowledge and declare the glory of God, and his infinite power, which appears in the works of his providence, and especially in his exalting and blessing those who please him. It is very suitable to Christians.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXIV.

In this short Psalm we have a noble description of the power which God displayed when the Israelites came out of Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea; and when the river Jordan was dried up at their entrance into the land of Canaan.

PSALM CXV.

This Psalm is supposed to have been used by the singers who were appointed to go before king Jehoshaphat's army; see *2 Chron. chap. xx. ver. 21*.

We should learn from it to ascribe to God not only all victory over our public enemies, but every good thing we do; and that his mercy ought always to be the foundation of our trust when we pray to him, because we have no merit of our own. What is said of the stupidity of idolaters who worship dead idols, and the work of men's hands, should engage us to bless the LORD for preserving us from idolatry, by making himself known to us; and should lead us to serve him with a pure and holy worship. Observe, in particular, the glorious promises at the end of the Psalm, *ver. 13, &c.*

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXVI.

From this pious Psalm we should learn that when God has bestowed any extraordinary blessing or favour upon us, and especially when he has delivered us from any great danger it is our duty to love him, to bless his holy name, to perform the vows we have made, and praise and thank him in the presence of all his people. The *cup of salvation* signified the wine which was offered to the Lord as a *drink offering*, and drank by the people in the feasts at their sacrifices. The wine which is drank by Christians in *the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, is very properly called the *cup of salvation*. This Psalm, in our church, makes part of the Office for Churching of Women, and it is very suitable to such occasions, as it is also to any other great deliverance which man or woman has received. But all should remember to do what they solemnly declare they will do, *ver. 17*, and also, to fulfil every vow or holy resolution made by them in the hour of pain and distress, and to make their thanksgivings publickly in the house of the LORD.

PSALM CXVII.

This short Psalm invites us to one of the most important duties of religion, which is to praise God continually for his goodness to us *as a nation*, that is, not for ourselves only, but for our king and government, and all our fellow subjects.

PSALM CXVIII.

This Psalm was sung at the Jewish feasts, and it is very suitable to Christian worship. There are some prophetic expressions in it relating to the Messiah, which are alluded to in the New Testament, *ver. 22*, The stone which the builders refused, *see Matt. xxi. ver. 42*; and *Acts, iv. 11*; *Ephes. ii. 20*; *2 Peter, ii. 4, 7*; Blessed be he that cometh, &c. *ver. 26*; *see Matthew, xxi. 9. xxiii. 39*; *Mark, xi. 9*; *Luke, xix. 38*.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXIX.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David during the reign of Saul, in which, though he was frequently persecuted, he had some quiet intervals which afforded him leisure for so long a composition ; but it might be written at some other period of his eventful life. It consists of twenty-two staves, of eight verses each, beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet, and ending at the last.

ALEPH.

Observe, *ver. 1, 2*, who are *blessed of the Lord*. The *undefiled in the way*, are those who keep strictly to the true worship of GOD, and lead holy lives. *Keeping his testimonies*, signifies obeying his divine ordinances, and reading the Holy Scriptures. The ordinances of the Christian church are, the *Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* : the first designed as a *testimony* that we are taken into covenant with GOD through JESUS CHRIST ; the other as a *testimony* that as we belong to CHRIST, as members of his church, we through him receive remission of our sins. Those who neglect either of these *holy Sacraments*, cannot be said to be *undefiled in the way*, or to *keep the Lord's testimonies*. Neither can those be said, *ver. 3*, to be *free from iniquity* who do not make use of the means of grace which CHRIST himself appointed for renewing them unto righteousness. *Ver. 4*, what precept can be more strong than that of our Saviour's respecting the LORD'S SUPPER, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" Yet how few obey it ! *Ver. 5* contains a petition for the help of the HOLY SPIRIT. By means of this divine gift, which all may have who pray for it, and the use of the Scriptures, we may know how to do what the Psalmist resolved to do, *ver. 6*, &c. ; but let us not forget that we must have respect unto all *God's commandments*, or we shall not have the blessing promised to those that are *undefiled*.

BETH.

Ver. 9. Young persons should pay particular regard to this portion of the Psalm, for they are often exposed to

temptation, and can only escape defilement by following the rules here given. How they are *to take heed*, the following verses teach them. Such resolutions, as are here expressed, formed in early youth, together with daily prayer for divine grace, would preserve young people from a thousand snares which are laid by Satan and wicked men to hinder their salvation. But what can those expect who will not make use of the means of grace? How seldom are young persons, for instance, fond of reading the Scriptures, and how seldom are they seen at the LORD'S TABLE, yet at no time of their lives can they be more in need of them.

GIMEL.

Observe, *ver. 18*, how earnestly the Psalmist prayed for the help of the HOLY SPIRIT. *Ver. 19*, every Christian should consider himself as a *stranger upon earth*, for *here*, as St. Paul says, *we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come*; see *Hebrews, chap. xiii. 14*. Observe, *ver. 23, 24*, what the Psalmist says concerning the *testimonies of the Lord*, and call to mind what they are. We can have no counsellor, like the word of GOD, to direct us in *all our ways*.

DALETH.

Every Christian will frequently find himself in the state described, *ver. 25*, not able to disengage his thoughts from worldly matters, and lift his soul to GOD. The petitions in this portion of the Psalm are very suitable to such occasions. Observe, *ver. 26*, that the help of the HOLY SPIRIT is necessary to enable us to understand the divine precepts; and *ver. 28*, that the soul stands in continual need of that support which is promised to the faithful in the word of GOD. Observe, *ver. 29*, how the servants of GOD should *abhor lying*; and *ver. 30*, what they should choose, and what they should *keep before them*. *Ver. 31*. How firmly they should keep to the ordinances of religion, not forsaking them as the manner of too many is, for which they will certainly be put to shame before men and angels at the last day. *Ver. 32*. The *heart is enlarged* when the help of the HOLY SPIRIT is granted to enable any one to understand the Scriptures.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

HE,

These verses show the effects of the HOLY SPIRIT; all that the Psalmist here prays for is granted to every one who prays with his whole heart to be thus enlightened and strengthened. But we must sincerely desire this help, and resolve to make use of it, or it will not be granted.

VAU,

This portion of the Psalm is a continuation of the prayer in the foregoing one. Observe, the resolution formed by the Psalmist. It often happens, in such a world as this, that people meet with reproach for their good actions. The proper answer to such reproaches is, that we *will obey God's commandment*. We should never be ashamed of our Christian profession, for no honour is so great as that of being the *child of God, a member of Christ's church, and an heir to an heavenly inheritance*. Nor is any *liberty* to be compared to that of living according to the precepts of God, a liberty which, in this happy country, the poorest person will find he possesses, if he will but make use of it, *Ver. 28. To lift up the hands to the commandments*, signifies to use our bodily members in executing them. *To meditate on God's statutes*, is to study the Scriptures with a view to the keeping of them.

ZAIN.

Ver. 49, 50. The *second* of these verses helps us here to the sense of the *first*. It was a comfort to the Psalmist in his affliction that he knew the LORD would remember his gracious promise to help and deliver those who trust in him. *Ver. 51, 52, 53,* David appears to have been greatly troubled at this time. *Ver. 54, 55,* but he took the ready way to obtain the mercy he stood in need of; and *ver. 56,* shows that it was bestowed.

GHETH,

These verses show further how the Psalmist proceeded when he was in distress. *Ver. 57.* He considered the favour of the LORD as the best portion he could have. Observe, also, his resolution; and *ver. 58, 59,* that in consequence of

this resolution he set about examining his past life, when finding that in many respects it had not been strictly conformable to the *divine testimonies*, he determined that in future it should be so, and immediately set about a reformation. *Ver.* 61, though he had been deprived, by his enemies, of the advantage of going to the Tabernacle, he kept the law of GOD in his mind. Observe, *ver.* 62, his great zeal; and *ver.* 63, his choice of companions; also, *ver.* 64, his reflection and prayer.

TETH.

Observe, *ver.* 65, that David acknowledged that the LORD had *dealt well with him*; yet it appears from *ver.* 67, and 72, that he had been afflicted. Compare this with the foregoing portion of the Psalm, and you will find that having been led by his afflictions to think of his ways, to reform what was amiss, to pray to GOD both night and day, and to keep company with good people only, his afflictions had proved *blessings* to him. GOD does not afflict any of his creatures, but for some merciful and benevolent purpose; either to correct their faults and make them attentive to his commandments, that they may escape the punishment which they would bring upon themselves by breaking them, or to put their virtue to the proof that they may gain the *highest* rewards, eternal glory and happiness in heaven. Observe, *ver.* 72, and consider what it is that renders the word of GOD so precious; whether *silver* and *gold* can purchase the blessings of heaven; and how it is that we know there are such blessings, and are taught the way to obtain them.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

JOD.

The same kind of reflections as are contained in the foregoing verses are carried on here. *Ver.* 73, the *understanding* which the Psalmist here prayed for was the help of the HOLY SPIRIT to enable him to understand the divine commandments. Those who study the Scriptures without this help, depending upon their own reason only, make great mistakes; some of the most learned men in the world, the greatest philosophers,

Iosophers, have been the greatest *fools* in respect to spiritual things, because they fell into the error of trusting to their own reason in things which are far above man's finding out, or fully comprehending.

CAPH.

At the time these verses were penned the Psalmist was persecuted by his enemies, and his heart failed because he did not immediately receive the help he looked for; but he took the right method to obtain this help, *ver. 88*, he persevered in prayer, or, as the Apostle expressed it, *he prayed without ceasing*; see *1 Thessalonians, chap. v. ver. 17*.

LAMED.

We see here the happy effects of the Psalmist's perseverance, his *soul was quickened*, he was helped by the HOLY SPIRIT, and led to reflect on the faithfulness of the divine promises, and the benefit of God's holy ordinances; and his trust and confidence in the goodness of the LORD was awakened, so that instead of wearing out his life with vexation, he had cast aside desponding fears, and had recourse to the written word of God.

MEM.

Ver. 97, 103. In studying the HOLY SCRIPTURES the Psalmist found not merely comfort but joy; and so, undoubtedly, will all who study them for the same end, namely, to *learn their duty*, and *how to bear the calamities of life*. *Ver. 98*, there is no *true wisdom* but that which the word of God teaches, nor any pleasure equal to that which is found in the practice of piety.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

NUN.

Observe, that though the persecutions of the Psalmist continued, he still maintained his confidence in the Almighty. Observe, *ver. 105*, to what he compared the word of God, and consider that from it alone we can gain the *light of salvation*. *Ver. 106*, remember that every Christian is under a most solemn engagement from the vow made at his baptism, whether he renews it at the *Lord's table* as he ought to do,
or

or neglects it. *Ver. 108*, the *free-will offerings of the mouth* are praise and thanksgiving. *109*. To have the soul continually in hand, signifies to be in constant preparation for death. *Ver. 111*. Observe, what the Psalmist says here, and consider that there is nothing so valuable in this world as *God's testimonies*, because they will, if we set a due value upon them, and apply them to ourselves, secure to us the treasures of heaven. Call to mind what our Saviour says, *Matt. chap. vi. ver. 19, &c.* Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, &c. and follow the Psalmist's example, *ver. 112*, which is the right way to secure these treasures.

SAMECH.

Ver. 113. By *vain thoughts* are meant wicked thoughts, and all trifling ones that draw the mind away from God's laws. *Ver. 114*, those who are protected by the Almighty are safe from their enemies. *Ver. 115*. Observe this resolution, and make it your own, so as not to give your company willingly to those who would persuade you to do any thing contrary to God's commandments. *Ver. 116*. Those who hope for *lasting happiness from worldly things*, will in the end be *ashamed of their hope*; but this can never be the case with those whose hope is founded upon the promises of God. To know what these are, we must study the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament. *Ver. 117*. Those who *thus hope* may be said to be *held up by God*. *Ver. 118*. Observe this verse, and resolve to make the *statutes of God*, that is, his *holy law*, the rules for all your actions. *Ver. 119*. Think whether you shall like, at the end of the world, to be cast away as *dross*, a thing that is good for nothing; yet this is not all; remember where the wicked will be cast into. *Ver. 120*. The thought of being sent to a place of everlasting torment will make any one tremble.

AIN.

Ver. 121. Observe, that the testimony of a good conscience soon removed the great terror which the Psalmist felt when he thought of God's judgments, and he was encouraged to pray to the LORD, and to express the devout sentiments of his heart. Observe, in particular, *ver. 127, 128*, for *so* should all to whom the laws and precepts of the LORD have been made known, love and esteem them.

PE.

These verses express the devout feelings of a pious heart. 129. The testimonies of the Lord certainly are *wonderful*; they bear undoubted marks of their divine original. David considered the *sacrifices and institutes of the Jewish law* in this light; and such to us are those of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, and all that God has been pleased to reveal *through Jesus Christ*. We have therefore the greatest reason to *keep them*. Ver. 130, 132. By *the simple*, are meant those who are humble-minded and willing to receive divine truths. Ver. 131. Observe how earnest the Psalmist's desire was. Ver. 133. This is a petition for *the grace of God*, without which no one can keep from iniquity. Ver. 135. *Make thy face to shine*, signifies *show me thy favour*. Ver. 136. It was a subject of great grief to the Psalmist to see so much wickedness in the world; and so it must be to every good man.

TSADDI.

Ver. 137, 138, 140, 142, 144. Whoever considers the ways of the LORD as they are shown in the Scriptures, and seen in the world, must be convinced of the truth of what the Psalmist says concerning them. Ver. 139. *Zeal for the word of the LORD*, signifies a strong and earnest desire to see others obeying them. Ver. 141. However mean the circumstances of any person may render him in the eyes of his fellow creatures, he may be assured that he will not be deprived of God, if he obeys his precepts, Ver. 143. Observe, that the Psalmist felt *delight* in the midst of *trouble*; and so will every one who like him seeks comfort in God's holy word and ordinances.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

KOPH.

These verses describe in what manner the Psalmist sought comfort in the time of trouble and affliction. Consider them well. Ver. 148. *His eyes prevented the night watches*, signified that he kept from sleeping in order to think of God's word in the night.

RESH.

Ver. 153. Happy is it for the afflicted when they can offer such a petition as this! *Ver. 154.* *Plead my cause, &c.* is a proper petition for a Christian to his Saviour for deliverance from sin, and for spiritual life by the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 156.* The *mercies of the Lord* may indeed be called *tender*, since they infinitely exceed the kindness of the most affectionate earthly parent. *Ver. 157.* Those who have not earthly enemies have at least spiritual ones, which should make them keep firmly to God's testimonies. *Ver. 158.* All good persons should be grieved to see their fellow creatures doing wickedly, and God's commandments broken. *Ver. 159.* God will *quicken* or *give spiritual life* to those who love his precepts. *Ver. 160.* We should always keep in mind what is said here.

SCHIN.

Ver. 161. David was often persecuted by princes, particularly by Saul. *Ver. 162.* By *spoil*, is meant the things which people gain in the field of battle after a victory. David obtained many victories, but the greatest part of the spoil he obtained he laid up to be used in building a Temple for the LORD; *see 1 Chron. chap. xxviii. xxix.* *Ver. 163.* *Lying* is a most hateful and abominable vice. We read in the New Testament what will be the fate of liars; *see Rev. xxi. 8.* *Ver. 165.* The peace here meant is that which our Saviour promised to his disciples as his last legacy; *John, xiv. 27,* and which the Apostle calls *the peace of God which passeth all understanding, Philipp. iv. 7.* The things which *offend*, signify whatever makes them unhappy. *Ver. 164.* Observe how *frequently* in the day the Psalmist praised God. Every Christian may do it as often without neglecting his worldly business. The silent praise that comes from a good disposed heart is accepted by God; and the same may be said of *prayer* also. *Ver. 166.* This should be the Christian's constant *hope* and *endeavour*. *167, 168.* What comfort must those have who can apply these verses to themselves!

TAU.

These verses contain an excellent prayer, well suited to Christians, from beginning to end. This Psalm is, in itself, a treasury of devotion.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXX.

This Psalm is supposed to have been made by king David when the slanders of Doeg and others had forced him to fly from his country. It shows that it is a great affliction to good men to live among the wicked and ungodly. *Ver. 4.* *Sharp arrows and coals of juniper,* mean the judgments of God. *Ver. 5.* Mefech and Kedar are supposed to have been places in Arabia, inhabited by the descendants of Ishmael, who dwelt in tents, instead of houses, as the Arabians do at this time.

PSALM CXXI.

This Psalm is thought to have been written by king David whilst he was in the field with the army during Absalom's rebellion. It is full of comfort to such as put their trust in God.

PSALM CXXII.

This Psalm was probably written by king David upon his settling the Tabernacle and the Ark upon Mount Sion, or on the anniversary of that solemnity. David's great zeal for the Tabernacle, and the city of Jerusalem, and for the tribes of Israel, instructs all the members of the Christian church to pray continually for the peace of the church, and to do all in their power to promote true religion around them for the sake of their fellow members as well as for their own.

PSALM CXXIII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been made by the Prophet Isaiah, when king Hezekiah desired *him to lift up his prayer for the remnant* that was left; *see 2 Kings, chap. xix. ver. 4; Isaiah, chap. xxxvii. ver. 4; also 2 Chron. chap. xxxii. ver. 10;* and it is very suitable to those who are exposed to the contempt, persecution, and cruelty of the wicked, as it teaches them to pray to God for deliverance, and to place their firm trust in his mercy and goodness.

PSALM CXXIV.

This Psalm appears to have been composed by king David upon his being delivered from the hands of Saul; and it was appointed to be sung by the Levites after the return of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity; but it is still better suited to the Christian than to the Jewish church, and should engage us to reflect upon the different conditions of the church of Christ at various times, and to consider that notwithstanding the attempts which Satan and the world have made against it from the beginning, it still subsists; from whence we may conclude that God will be always its strength and support, and will never permit it to be destroyed.

PSALM CXXV.

This Psalm is supposed to have been occasioned by Senacherib's threatenings to destroy Jerusalem; and these, perhaps, are some of the comfortable words Hezekiah then spake; *see 2 Chron. chap. xxxii. ver. 6.* It represents to us, in few words, the happy condition of those who fear God and put their trust in him; and it furnishes believers with powerful motives to be always quiet and contented, placing their whole confidence in God, and endeavouring to be more strict in the performance of their duty. *Ver. 3.* The rod of the wicked signifies the power which God permits them sometimes to exercise over his servants for their correction; *see Isaiah, chap. x. ver. 5,* where Senacherib is called *the rod of God's anger.* *Ver. 5.* *Crooked ways* are *sinful doings.* *Israel* means the people of God.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXVI.

This Psalm, which is a song of thanksgiving, is thought to have been composed by Ezra upon the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. It should lead us to reflect on the wonderful things which God has done numberless times for his people by delivering them, contrary to all appearances,

pearances, from the hands of their enemies. *Ver. 5, 6.* The small remnant of God's people who returned to plant themselves again in their own land, and to rebuild Jerusalem, are here compared to an husbandman who, in a time of scarcity, sows his seed with but little prospect of a crop, yet oftentimes receives, by the goodness of the LORD, a plentiful increase. These verses are very comfortable to people in distress and poverty, who may hope for better days.

PSALM CXXVII.

Ver. 1, 2. Observe, that it is not the care men are able to take themselves, but the blessing of God, that makes kingdoms, cities, and families, subsist; therefore all fathers and mothers, according to the station of life they may be in, should endeavour to obtain this blessing, and not depend entirely upon their own labours for providing for their families; neither should any one boast that he had himself raised his family in the world, for unless God had pleased he could not have done it; neither can families be truly happy, if ever so rich and prosperous, without the blessing of God; and with this blessing they can never be wretched, for God will support them under every trial. *Ver. 3.* Many people, particularly the poor, are apt to consider a large family as a burden and a misfortune; but the Psalmist calls them a *heritage*, or valuable possession; and so they will ever prove to those who bring their children up to fear and love God, and keep his commandments, and to be kind to one another. Observe, *ver. 4, 5*, to what the Psalmist compares such a band of brethren. Happy indeed are the parents of such children, whether sons or daughters! They will be their glory and their joy, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; neither will Satan ever triumph over such a family.

PSALM CXXVIII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been used by the Jews in their office of matrimony. Though the temporal blessings which were promised to the Jews are not the chief things which Christians ought to seek after, yet when bestowed upon good people, they are to be considered as a reward of piety,

piety, and to be received with thankfulness. We may observe that God always blesses those families in which piety prevails, and showers down upon them spiritual blessings, and we may be sure that he will at last exalt those who live uprightly to the supreme happiness of heaven.

PSALM CXXIX.

This Psalm is thought to have been written by Ezra after the return of the Jews from their captivity, and to have been occasioned by the difficulties they had to struggle with about rebuilding their walls; *see Nehemiah, chap. ii.*

PSALM CXXX.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David whilst he was persecuted by Saul, and reduced to a very low condition. Observe, *ver. 3, 4*, and remember that as no one is free from sin, no one by his own righteousness can be justified before God. We must, therefore, as Christians have recourse to God's mercy through Christ, acknowledging ourselves to be sinners. *Ver. 5.* To wait for the LORD, signifies to be patient till it pleases God to send comfort. *Ver. 7, 8*, show that the Psalmist soon had this comfort, in the thoughts with which he was inspired, and which may be considered as the promises of God to all the members of his church.

PSALM CXXXI.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David when he was suspected of wanting to take the kingdom during Saul's life; and it expresses such sentiments as all the children of God ought to entertain. What David here teaches agrees with our blessed Saviour's doctrine that those who would enter the kingdom of heaven must humble themselves and become as little children. *See Matthew, chap. xviii.*

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXII.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by king Solomon, and sung at the dedication of the Temple by the Levites and the congregation. Though Solomon built the Temple, it was David's zeal which led to its being built; *see 2 Sam. chap. vii.* The vow which David made, and to which Solomon alluded, in the first verse of this Psalm, shows the piety of the royal Psalmist's heart, and the favour which God bestowed upon him in permitting him so far to put his design in execution, as to purchase the ground on which the Temple should be built, to provide a great quantity of rich materials for its ornaments, and to give full directions concerning the order of the priests and Levites, and every part of public worship. From David's example, in this instance, Christians should learn to be zealous for the building of churches where they are wanted, and for the keeping up of those which are already built; also, for the proper maintenance of the ministers of religion. It is a very great misfortune to any neighbourhood not to have a good church to go to, and a very great sin to neglect to attend it.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This Psalm is thought to have been written by king David when the tribes of Israel were contending who should bring him back after Absalom had driven him from his kingdom; *see 2 Sam. chap. xix. 41, &c.*; but it contains a good lesson both for private families and communities. *Ver. 2. The precious ointment* was that with which the high priest was consecrated to his office; *see Exodus, chap. xxx. ver. 23, &c.* and *Leviticus, chap. viii. ver. 12*, which perfumed all the place with its fragrance. *Ver. 3. The dew of Hermon*, signified the morning dew upon the holy mountain. These comparisons show how excellent and delightful brotherly love is.

PSALM CXXXIV.

This is supposed to have been the evening hymn sung at the shutting up of the gates of the Temple to excite the priests and Levites, whose turn it was to watch that night, to be diligent in their office, which was that of making devout prayers for the people.

PSALM CXXXV.

This was probably the morning hymn at the opening of the gates of the Temple. Though it chiefly refers to Jewish affairs, we may learn from it no less than the Israelites, to bless God, and to celebrate his power, wisdom, and goodness, which appear in the creation and government of the world, and particularly for what he has been pleased to do for us through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour. *Ver. 4.* Observe, in what light the LORD regarded the Israelites as his chosen people. Christians are equally precious in his sight as members of Christ's church.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXVI.

This Psalm was probably written to be sung at the great festivals. It must be observed that throughout the whole of it the Levites and the people sing in turns, and that in every verse they praise God with these words, *for his mercy endureth for ever.* This form was made use of at that time, and consecrated in a particular manner to praise God in the Temple. It is equally suitable to Christian worship.

PSALM CXXXVII.

Ver. 1, 2. This Psalm appears to have been made during the Babylonian captivity, and it gives us a lively idea of the sorrows of pious people when they are prisoners of war, in a country where the religion is a false one. *Ver. 3.* It must have been felt as a great and cruel insult by the Jews, who had been used to the divine service of the Temple at Jerusalem, to be asked to sing a part of it, as one of *the songs of Zion,*
for

for the amusement of heathens; and the expressions in *ver. 5, 6*, show that the writer of the Psalm, whoever he was, considered it as such. All Christians who, by the chance of war, are thrown into such an unfortunate situation, should cherish the love of their native country, and preserve a fervent zeal for their holy religion, resolving never to dishonour it by any sinful compliance. They should rather forget themselves and their own concerns, than forget what will promote God's glory. The latter part of the Psalm was a prophecy of the destruction of the Edomites and Babylonians, which happened a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

This Psalm was composed by king David as a thanksgiving to God for raising him from a low and afflicted condition to the royal dignity, and it was afterwards made use of by the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah at the rebuilding of the Temple. But all who fear and love God may apply to themselves, with confidence, the last verses of this Psalm.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Ver. 1 to 13. We ought to consider this Psalm with great attention, for this is one of those parts in Scripture which speak most clearly of the divine presence and knowledge, and shows that nothing can be hid from God. *Ver. 13 to 17.* The wonderful manner in which God has given us being and life, affords us abundant cause to acknowledge his power and goodness, and should incite us to employ both our souls and our bodies in his service. *Ver. 17 to the end.* The power and goodness of God ought to fill those who serve him truly with great confidence, and fortify them against all fear of men; lead them to hate all kinds of wickedness, because it is hateful to God, and to shun the company of wicked people, but without hating them personally. Christians are to strive to imitate their heavenly Father who hates unrighteousness, but does good to sinners, and uses great patience towards them to bring them to repentance; *see Matt. chap. v. 44, &c.*

PSALM CXL.

David appears to have been very cruelly persecuted at the time he wrote this Psalm. The deprecations at the latter end of it, on the heathen nations, are by no means suitable to Christians, for they are expressly commanded to pray for their enemies instead of cursing them.

PSALM CXLI.

This Psalm was also written by David in his troubles during Saul's reign. He here, in particular, prays for God's grace that he might not, by any intemperate or imprudent words, give his enemies advantage against him. The petitions it contains are very suitable to Christians.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLII.

This Psalm was David's meditation in the cave of Engedi; see 1 Sam. chap. xxiv. It teaches us that to the LORD we must apply for help in the day of distress. The history of David shows that he was delivered from the dangers which threatened him, and teaches us that the confidence of God's faithful servants is never in vain; and that God never wants means to deliver them out of danger, and to change their sorrow into joy and thanksgiving.

PSALM CXLIII.

This Psalm is thought to have been composed by David when his son Absalom was in rebellion against him. The prayer at the beginning of it is of general use, for there is no man who has not reason to make it with humility and fervency; and as the Psalmist prayed against his temporal enemies, we may pray against our spiritual ones, namely, *the world, the flesh, and the devil.*

THIRTIETH DAY. MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CLXIV.

This Psalm seems to relate to some of David's victories over the Philistines, at the beginning of his reign; and it teaches us to give glory to God for all the good things that befall us, and at the same time to acknowledge our own unworthiness. From the latter part of the Psalm we learn that as peace, plenty, and temporal prosperity, are the effects of God's good providence, we ought to receive those blessings with thankfulness, and to make a right use of them. Observe, in particular, *ver. 3*, and consider the wonderful condescension of the Almighty in regarding such sinful creatures. *Ver. 4*. Reflect often on the shortness of life. *Ver. 12*. The meaning of this is that young persons should be educated so that, with the blessing of God, they may do honour to religion. *Ver. 15*. Observe this promise to righteous nations. Every individual, that is, every person in a nation, should do his part towards bringing down this blessing.

PSALM CXLV.

This most excellent Psalm can scarcely fail to fill our minds with fervent devotion. Consider it well. *Ver. 2*. We should not let a day pass without praising our Almighty benefactor. *Ver. 4*. One generation praises the LORD unto another, when parents teach their children their duty. *Ver. 8, 9*. Observe this as a gracious promise. *Ver. 13*. Observe, that David here speaks of the kingdom of heaven. *14 to 18*. Consider how good, how holy, and how righteous the LORD is. *Ver. 18 to 21*. These may be considered as divine promises also. *Ver. 21*. So ought all Christians to do and wish.

PSALM CXLVI.

We should learn from this Psalm that the happiest employment of time is to spend it in praising and glorifying God, and that we should continue to do so every day of our lives. Also, that it is a great folly to place our whole trust

and confidence in any human being, since the greatest of them can do no good to others without God's permission. *Ver. 7 to 10*, are divine and comfortable promises. *Ver. 10* is a prophecy which will be fulfilled at the second coming of our Saviour.

THIRTIETH DAY. EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLVII.

This Psalm is supposed to relate to the return of the Jews from captivity, and the restoration of Jerusalem which followed upon it. It was probably composed by Nehemiah. It teaches us to praise God for the blessings of creation, and also for the greater blessings of his word, the Holy Scriptures.

PSALM CXLVIII.

This Psalm is thought to have been written by David when his kingdom was in a very flourishing condition, and when God had given him rest from all his enemies; *see 2 Sam. chap. vii. ver. 1.* It is a very sublime and beautiful hymn. Observe, that David does not worship angels. *Ver. 1, 2,* The different orders of angels are called *hosts*, because God makes use of them as a king does of his armies for the execution of his designs, as we learn from many texts of Scripture. *Ver. 3, 4. Praise him ye sun, &c.* signifies that all the works of God show forth his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is the duty of men to bless God for having created them, as they are all useful to man in one way or other. *Ver. 11, 12, 13.* These verses show that all sorts of persons are under an obligation to praise God. *Ver. 14.* Saints signify the peculiar people of the LORD.

PSALM CXLIX.

This is a hymn of praise for some great victory. As the Israelites sung hymns of joy because God had made them triumph over their enemies, and the kings that waged war against them, so ought Christians to praise God for the care he has taken of his church, and for all the favours bestowed upon them, but chiefly for subduing their spiritual enemies.

PSALM CL.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written by David as a song of triumph, and to have been more particularly directed to the Levites, whose office it was to praise the LORD with musical instruments; *see 1 Chron. chap. xvi. ver. 4, 5.* This Psalm, which is the last in the Book, should inspire us all with a holy zeal to praise continually the majesty of God, his infinite power, and all his adorable perfections, not only with our lips and voices, but chiefly with our hearts. To this end let us make a good use of the many excellent exhortations and divine patterns contained in the Book of Psalms, that after we have praised and glorified God upon earth we may glorify him eternally in the heavens with all the blessed spirits.

 PROVERBS.

THE Book of Proverbs, which was written by king Solomon, consists of two parts: the first nine chapters, which form the first part, relate to WISDOM, by which is meant RELIGION. The other part, which begins at the 10th chapter, is a collection of proverbs and moral sentences upon a variety of subjects. The sentences of this book are short; their stile figurative, after the manner of the Eastern writers, but their meaning is of the greatest importance, as they furnish excellent instructions upon every kind of duty, suited to all persons and conditions.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 7. These verses are a kind of preface which show that the design of the book is to teach us true wisdom. Observe, *ver. vii.* what is the foundation of true wisdom or religion. The *fear of the LORD* is such a fear as shall lead us to learn his will and commandments that we may know how to please him. Observe, *ver. 9,* that the virtues which

spring from religion are compared to such ornaments as are worn by people of fortune, because they gain distinction and respect. Observe, *ver. 10*, and avoid the company of the wicked lest they draw you into evil. How many thoughtless people would have been saved from ruin, nay, even from an untimely and ignominious death, had they attended to the advice of the wise man! *Ver. 20*. These verses show that God affords means and opportunities for men to know their duty; that he rules sinners, and is ready to bestow his grace upon them, and that he does not forsake them till after they have despised his counsels and abused his patience; but that if they persist in their wickedness, they must suffer the consequences of their obstinacy and folly, while the righteous shall be safe and happy under the divine favour and protection.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 10. These verses instruct us to seek true wisdom with all our heart; and assure us that if we do so, we shall find a treasure far more valuable than any thing worldly riches can afford; that it is not difficult to attain, and that God gives it to all who sincerely desire and seek for it. *Ver. 10 to 16*. We here learn the advantages which arise from the possession of this divine wisdom. *Ver. 16 to the end*. These verses should serve as a warning to young men to avoid the company of bad women.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, here, the grave and affecting exhortations which Solomon addresses to mankind, and his descriptions of the happiness of those who give themselves up to the guidance and direction of wisdom. *Ver. 5, 6, 7*. To trust in God, and not in our own ways, is a most excellent rule, which we should always keep in mind. *Ver. 9, 10*, signify to honour God by a holy and religious use of our substance, and of all the temporal blessings he bestows upon us. *Ver. 11, 12*. We should call to mind these verses in the time of affliction for they are full of comfort. *Ver. 13, 14*. Observe, very attentively, these verses, and let them lead you to endeavour above all things to gain the knowledge of religion.

religion. *Ver. 16* shows us why religion is more precious than gold and jewels; namely, that the former gives length of days, even eternal life. The others we may be robbed of, or if we keep them safely, they will not preserve us from sickness or death, neither can we carry them out of the world with us. *Ver. 17.* The ways of religion are certainly pleasant, and her paths peace, because they lead to everlasting happiness. Observe, *ver. 18,* to what religion is compared, and, as you wish for happiness, retain it; that is, keep it as long as you live. *Ver. 22.* Observe what religion will prove to you; and, *ver. 23,* how safely you will go through this life, and be preserved from falling into sin. *Ver. 24 to 27.* Consider what a comfort it is to lie down without fear, &c. as those do who know that they are in favour with God. *Ver. 27 to 32.* Follow these rules in your dealings with your fellow creatures. *Ver. 32.* By the *froward* is meant an obstinate, ill-natured man who has no religion. The *secret of the LORD* signifies the knowledge of the revealed will of God. *Ver. 34.* The *scorners* are those who despise religion and refuse to submit to God's commandments. *Grace* is the help of God's Holy Spirit. The *lowly* are people of humble minds. The wise are religious people. Fools are wicked people.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 7. All persons, but especially the young, may find in these verses powerful motives to induce them to lay hold of the instructions which are given them to form a habit of piety and virtue. *Ver. 7 to 13.* *Wisdom*, that is, religion, should be regarded as the principal thing; because it is that alone which can secure us from the dangers of the world and give us eternal life and glory. *Ver. 14.* It is very dangerous for any one to enter into the path of evil men, or to trust himself in their company, as there is no knowing how far they may lead him on in the ways of wickedness. *Ver. 18.* The paths of the just, or the ways of righteousness, we are well assured will lead us to heaven. That of the wicked is the direct contrary. *Ver. 23.* To keep the heart with all diligence, signifies to keep a strict watch over ourselves that no bad principles may take root in our minds. According as our hearts are disposed to righteousness or wickedness, such will

be our actions. *Ver. 24 to the end.* To put away a froward mouth, &c. signifies so to order our words and actions that we may never speak bad words, or do bad things. *Ver. 25, 26;* To look straight forward, &c. signifies to keep steady to our duty.

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter Solomon earnestly exhorts men, and young men in particular, not to suffer themselves to be seduced by bad women, and tells them of the dangers to which they are exposed who give way to their seductions; reminding them particularly, that the actions of men are all exposed to the eye of God, and that he examines all their proceedings. These considerations, added to the many other motives which the Gospel furnishes us with, ought to inspire every one with the greatest abhorrence of uncleanness, and lead them to be pure and chaste, both in body and spirit; always remembering that we are constantly under the inspection of God. They should observe, in particular, *ver. 5.*

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 6. The advice which Solomon here gives does not mean that men should never be sureties for any persons whatever; but that they should not, without great caution, engage for one another. The Israelites, in particular, were to beware of being bound for strangers, because they were not to have familiar dealings with the neighbouring heathen nations. *Ver. 6 to 12.* Remember what the wise man here says of idleness, and what it will bring a man to; but above all avoid it, because it corrupts the heart, and leads those who give way to it, into temptation and sin. *Ver. 12 to 16.* The persons meant in these verses are those who are sly, artful, deceitful, and cruel; who contrive mischief, and set others at variance by false reports. Observe, *ver. 15,* the end of these men, when the misfortunes of life come upon them there is none to pity and help them; and when they die there is none to deliver them from eternal misery. *Ver. 16 to 20.* Take particular notice of these verses, that you may avoid the sins here mentioned, for it is a dreadful thing to be abominable in the sight of God. *Ver. 20 to the*

the end. Observe how strongly the wise man admonishes young persons to be obedient to both their parents. We may know, from the rest of the chapter, that he meant this admonition for youths, not for mere children. Observe, *ver. 23*, that the commands of a good parent are compared to a *lamp*, because they enable those who make use of them to see what is their duty. When young men first mix in the world they are usually exposed to great temptations from bad women, against whose artifices and delusions good parents warn their sons, by pointing out to them the dangers of such connexions, particularly, if these women are married. In our own days, such advice and caution as is here given is particularly necessary; every parent should therefore give it, and every son should follow it. *Ver. 30, 31*, allude to the Jewish law, which made a distinction in favour of those who stole to satisfy their hunger.

CHAPTER VII.

The frequent warnings of the wise man, from the beginning of this book, to guard men against impurity and adultery show that these sins are highly offensive in the sight of God, and ruinous to those that practise them; such being the case, those who are truly wise avoid the snares of the wanton. We find, in this chapter, that the impure and unclean are fond of pleasures and finery. Solomon shows that we cannot too studiously avoid persons of this character; and that those who are drawn away by the lusts of the flesh, are like brute beasts which have no understanding, and hasten to their own destruction; for this, and the foregoing chapter, show that divine vengeance pursues them in a particular manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. In these verses divine wisdom is represented as calling upon all men, without exception, even sinners, to receive instruction from the word of God. Observe, *ver. 9*, that religion is not a difficult thing to understand when people are desirous to know it. Also, *ver. 10, 11*, the great value of religious knowledge. *Ver. 12 to 22.* These verses show that religious wisdom is the most excellent thing any person can possess. *Ver. 22 to 32.* Observe, that religion is no in-
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vention of man, but a truly *divine thing*, proceeding from God himself. It is called his delight, because it promotes happiness. *Ver. 32 to the end.* Those persons who refuse to hearken to it must be very foolish, for they hazard the loss of God's favour here, and of eternal life hereafter.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses wisdom is described under the similitude of a person who has provided a feast, of which she earnestly entreats all mankind to partake. This agrees with our Saviour's parable of the marriage feast; *see Matthew, chap. xxii.* *Ver. 7 to 13.* These verses show that the counsels of wisdom are not received alike by all; that wise men hearken to them with pleasure and improve by them, but worldly and prophane men make a mock at them, and only take occasion from them to grow more wicked. *Ver. 13 to the end.* These verses teach us that we cannot stand too much upon our guard against the temptations of vice. *Ver. 17.* *Stolen waters*, signify any thing, whether of pleasure or profit, gained in the way of wickedness. Observe, *ver. 18*, what these lead to, and remember *where* they will lead those to, who die without repentance and amendment of life.

CHAPTER X.

Here begins the second Part of the Book of Proverbs, which is full of useful instruction for the conduct of mankind in this world. The precepts and maxims in this and the following chapters, are for the most part very easy to be understood, and those who have had any experience in the affairs of human life must see the truth of them. But as these were certainly written by divine inspiration, as well as those which go before, we ought to consider what they contain as the precepts of that wisdom which is so strongly recommended in the first part of the book; and also, as conveying some of the gracious promises of God to those who keep his commandments, and his threatenings to those that break them. Observe, in particular, *ver. 3, 6, 7, 27, 30.* *Ver. 13, 14.* Remember that *understanding* and *wisdom*, here mean religious knowledge. *Ver. 21.* *Fools* mean those who despise such knowledge. The blessing of the LORD gives true

riches; namely, that peace which passeth all understanding, and eternal life and happiness. *Ver. 24.* *The fear of the wicked*, signify those things of which his conscience makes him afraid. *Ver. 28.* *The hope of the righteous* is, to be happy for ever in heaven. *The expectation of the wicked* is, to possess the things of this world according to his heart's desire. *Ver. 30.* When the righteous gain their hope they will never be removed. The wicked cannot remain for ever in the earth. *Ver. 32.* The righteous study the Scriptures in order to govern their words as well as their actions. The wicked talk at random.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1. This verse should lead people who keep shops to consider what a heinous offence it is to sell by short weight and measure; yet how often is this done even by the poor to the poor! But God will certainly punish those who are guilty of such practices, whilst those who deal fairly may expect the particular blessing of the LORD. *Ver. 4.* What good will even riches ill gotten do any one? *Ver. 9.* *An hypocrite* signifies a deceitful person, who pretends to be righteous and good, but has a wicked heart. *Ver. 11.* Observe, that every good person helps to promote the welfare of the community of which he is a member, by the blessing that attends him; and that it is by the *wicked*, cities and nations are overthrown. Observe, *ver. 22*, that it is not beauty that renders a woman truly valuable, but discretion; that is, modest and prudent behaviour. *Ver. 24.* Those *that scatter*, signify those who do good to others with their wealth. Those *that withhold* are the covetous, who suffer the evils of poverty, by not using their money. *Ver. 26.* Those who really *withhold corn*, are guilty of a heinous sin; but Christians must not *curse* any body, and very often, in times of scarcity, people are suspected of this sin without cause. *Ver. 27, 28*, properly considered, would keep people from this and many other covetous acts. *Ver. 29.* It is certainly the duty of every person to try to make his own family comfortable; those who do otherwise part with their own best earthly comfort. *Ver. 33.* *To win souls*, signifies to persuade other people to attend to that which alone can bring salvation to them, Religion.

Ver.

Ver. 31. It very often happens that good people are blessed in a particular manner in this life, and the wicked punished; but this is not to be regarded by good Christians as a general rule: they are taught to look for a better recompence in a future life, and in another world the wicked man will receive his final punishment.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1. Some people are so proud that even when they know they have done wrong things they will not bear to be told of them. These are called *brutish*, because they do not make use of their reason. *Ver. 4.* Observe, what the wise man says of a virtuous wife, and consider what a wicked thing it is for a woman to ruin her husband, or bring shame upon him. *Ver. 10.* Those who have the care of poor beasts should consider what is here said about using them ill. By the *tender mercies* of the wicked, perhaps, are meant the using those creatures *contrary to their nature*, as is often the case in respect to *race horses*, &c. *Ver. 18.* By those who speak like the *piercings of a sword*, are meant those who make unkind speeches that wound the hearts of others. This is frequently done in malice, and sometimes without thought, only for the sake of some silly jest: but the truly religious person will not only be careful to avoid giving pain, he will endeavour to promote the happiness of others by his discourse. *Ver. 19.* Observe this maxim, and never venture to utter falsehoods. *21.* Even the misfortunes of life are turned into blessings to the good, by promoting their eternal happiness. *Ver. 28.* Eternal life and death are here meant.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1. This is a maxim for *young people* who are too apt to think themselves wise enough without the instruction of their fathers. *Ver. 3.* To *keep the mouth*, is to be careful what expressions come out of it. *Ver. 7.* The persons here meant are *spendthrifts*, who squander their riches, and *misers* that hoard them. *Ver. 24.* The wise man here recommends parents to chastise their children betimes, but he does not encourage them to take up the rod as many do for trifling faults. It is certainly wrong to let children grow up in wickedness.

wickedness or folly, but their tempers may be spoiled and their hearts hardened by severe beating.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1. To *build up her house*, or *pluck it down*, signifies doing good or harm to her family. The prosperity of families depends greatly amongst the poor and the middle classes of life also, upon the conduct of women; every woman, therefore, should consider what may be the consequence of her imprudence, and keep from idleness and extravagance. *Ver. 6.* Those who despise religion often make great pretensions to wisdom, but they are the most foolish of mankind in the sight of God. The following verses show that folly gives many marks by which the truly wise are distinguished from those who are foolish in God's eyes; they should be frequently read and meditated upon. *Ver. 12.* Consider what way that is that leadeth to death; and *ver. 13*, what kind of laughter and mirth that is which ends in sorrow. *Ver. 15.* Take a caution from this verse not to place a hasty confidence in others. *Ver. 20, 21.* Observe how the LORD defends the cause of the poor. *Ver. 26.* Whoever fears the LORD, as he ought to do, will have a strong confidence, because the LORD has promised to bless and favour those who do so. Observe, *ver. 29*, and let it serve as a warning to you not to give way to anger. *Ver. 30.* Envy is a dreadful thing, for it preys upon the life of those who give way to it. *Ver. 32.* Think from whom, and to what place the wicked are driven at their death, and what the hope of the righteous man is when he is going to depart from this world. *Ver. 30.* The righteousness or sinfulness of a nation is determined by the conduct of the individuals that compose it; every one contributes either to the one or the other. This should make each person look well to his own ways for the love of his country.

CHAPTER XV.

The maxims of this chapter are, for the most part, easy to be understood. *Ver. 8.* The *sacrifice of the wicked* signify the prayers and praises which wicked people offer up in God's house without sincerity. *Ver. 13 and 15.* A *merry heart*, signifies a chearful

cheerful temper which enables people to bear without uneasiness many troubles which people of fretful tempers find very heavy. *Ver. 19.* By a *hedge of thorns*, may be understood the troubles such an one fancies there is in all kinds of labour, which those who are diligent in doing their duty do not meet with. *Ver. 21.* To *walk uprightly*, signifies to live agreeably to the commandments of God. *Ver. 24.* Those who are truly wise have a proper regard for the heavenly inheritance provided for the children of God, and are careful to avoid wickedness which leads to hell.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 4. These verses signify that without the guidance of the LORD we can do nothing well, and that if we would think and do what is right, we must pray for this help of the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 4.* means that God disposes every thing with perfect wisdom and justice, and makes even the wicked themselves contribute to the fulfilment of his righteous judgments, by using them as instruments to execute his will on those he sees fit to punish or destroy. *Ver. 10 to 16.* These verses relate chiefly to kings. *Ver. 16 to the end.* These convey instruction to persons of all ranks. The wise man exhorts them to apply themselves to the study of true wisdom, and of the fear of God, since these are of more value than all the riches in the world; to be prudent, meek, moderate, in their discourse and actions, and to abstain from slander, malice, and wrath. *Ver. 31.* Observe, that a virtuous old age is very honourable. *Ver. 32* signifies that the man who has a command over his temper has great merit as well as great advantage in the world. How foolish then, as well as wicked, are those who put themselves in a passion even for trifles.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. Those whose lot it is to eat a *homely meal* should remember this, and not make it a *bitter one* by ill temper. Many people in the world of contented minds experience the truth of this maxim. *Ver. 3.* We should always remember that it is to make them better the LORD sends afflictions upon his servants.

We may learn from this chapter that there are *three things* necessary

necessary to make a family happy, namely, peace, faithful servants, and children brought up in virtue; and that trials and afflictions are meant to purify the heart; that to despise the poor, and to take delight in the evil which befalls other men, is very wicked and highly displeasing to God, that we should be very careful never to begin a quarrel since we know not how it can be stopped; that one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy in this world is, to find true friends; that since joy makes life happy, and sorrow and vexation render it irksome, we ought to apply ourselves to the fear of God, which alone can give true contentment and satisfaction; that one of the chief effects of wisdom is to speak with discretion, and to know when to hold our tongues. All persons, according to their circumstances, should meditate upon these precepts and conform their actions to them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In this chapter king Solomon teaches us to use a great deal of prudence in our words and actions; to seek the conversation of wise men, and to improve by their instructions; to exercise justice, to put an end to disputes, and procure peace with all possible care; not to hearken to flatterers, nor to take pleasure in their discourse, and to shun idleness. *Ver. 10.* By the name of the LORD, we are to understand true religion; whoever keeps to that in faith and practice is safe. *Ver. 14.* By a wounded spirit, we may understand a troubled conscience. *Ver. 19.* When brothers and sisters quarrel it is often very difficult to reconcile them, but it ought not to be so; indeed such near relations should never quarrel. *Ver. 22.* This can only be said when a man finds a good wife; but numbers of those who complain of bad ones might have had good ones if they had been cautious in their choice, for marriage was at first designed as a blessing; and the favour of the LORD is still with those who do their duty in a married state.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1. To walk in his integrity, signifies to be pious towards God, and just towards men. *Ver. 2.* The knowledge here meant is religious knowledge. To make haste with the feet, means

to do things without considering beforehand. *Ver. 3.* It is a mark of the worst kind of folly to murmur at what the LORD sees fit should happen to us. *Ver. 5.* *False witnesses* are not only those who swear falsely in a court of justice, but all who slander their neighbours. Lying of all kinds is hateful to a GOD of truth, and is commonly punished in this world, and certainly in the next. *Ver. 7.* *Poverty* certainly does often occasion men to be slighted by their fellow creatures, but it is not so in respect to GOD; he is ever the poor man's friend if he does his duty. *Ver. 13.* There can scarcely be any greater misfortunes in this world than to have a wicked son and a quarrelsome wife; but the first may generally be prevented by the care and good example of the parent, and the latter by choosing a good tempered woman and using her kindly. *Ver. 14.* A *prudent wife is of the LORD*, signifies that, in the choice of a wife a man should prefer a woman who attends to her religious duties, and pray to GOD to direct his affections to such an one. Unhappy marriages mostly proceed from a contrary conduct. *Ver. 17.* Observe, how kind GOD is to the poor in making their cause his own. *Ver. 18.* The time to chasten a son, with the hope of his being the better for his chastisement, is his *childhood*; but it is a common thing to humour children in their early years and be severe to them when they are older: this is very wrong. *Let not thy soul spare, &c.* does not mean that parents are to beat their children unmercifully, but only to continue the *proper* chastisement without leaving off for his crying, as is often the case, which only encourages faults instead of correcting them. *Ver. 29.* The just judgments of heaven will certainly in the end fall upon those who despise God and religion, and the wicked will meet with their punishment either here or in the next life.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1. Wine may justly be called a *mock* when drank to excess, as it makes the drunkard an object of ridicule and contempt; and *strong drink* of all kinds is *raging*, as it generally occasions quarrels and many disorders. *Ver. 2.* This verse teaches us to reverence kings. *Ver. 3.* This applies to those who make up quarrels, and to those who foment them.

Ver.

Ver. 6. If the best men would look into themselves they would find that they had no goodness to boast of; for none are in all things faithful and obedient to God's laws. *Ver. 7.* The *just man* is he who has faith in God, strives to do his duty, and instructs his children to do theirs: this is the way to bring the divine blessing upon a family. *Ver. 9.* No human creature can say he has made his heart clean, for every one, as the child of Adam, comes into the world with the defilement of original sin; and none can be *purified* from *original* or *actual sin*, but through the atonement of CHRIST. *Ver. 14.* This verse alludes to a practice very common with those who go to purchase any thing; they cry down its value in order to get it cheaper, and having succeeded they boast of their artifice; this is as bad as selling by false weights and measures. *Ver. 17.* No kind of deceit can give true happiness, it always ends in disappointment one way or the other. *Ver. 20.* To *curse a father or mother* is the sure way for any son to bring the curse of God upon himself. This sin was punished with death by the Jewish law; see *Exodus*, chap. xxi. 17. *Ver. 22.* We should never return evil for evil. *Ver. 24.* That man will be sure to act right who makes the commandments of God the rule of his life. *Ver. 27.* By the *spirit of man* is to be understood here, his conscience, which searches his inmost soul.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 3. The LORD is better pleased with those who practise justice and mercy, than with those who, in time of necessity, turn their backs upon the sick and wretched to attend public worship; but we must not from this, and other texts, suppose that we may entirely neglect the latter to go in search of cases of distress where we are not wanted. *Ver. 16.* The *way of understanding* is the way of religion; the *congregation of the dead* is the society of wicked people, who are dead in trespasses and sins, and without hopes of eternal life while they remain in an unrepentant state. *Ver. 19.* Women ought to be of meek and quiet tempers, for it is their duty to submit to their husbands, and wicked to quarrel with those to whom they have vowed obedience. *Ver. 21.* Observe, here, what blessings are promised to the righteous.

Ver. 24. Those who are easily offended should observe what name is here given to such by the wisest of men, nay, by the LORD himself, for Solomon wrote by divine inspiration.

Ver. 27. People sometimes fancy that if they join with the good in religious worship, and in acts of charity, it is no matter how wicked their lives are, but GOD looketh on the heart. *Ver. 31.* This verse should remind those who engage in battle to pray for the help of the LORD.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1. A good character is often of more value than great riches; with the latter, a person may be unhappy in himself, despised by his fellow creatures, and hateful in the sight of GOD; therefore, if left to our choice to have one without the other, we certainly should choose the first; but riches are very frequently enjoyed with a *good name*, and there is no sin in possessing them if they have been honestly gained; at the same time it is very honourable for any one to gain a good character without them. *Ver. 2.* The different ranks in society were ordered by the Lord; the rich therefore should not despise the poor, neither should the poor hate the rich, as they often do from envy. *Ver. 4.* Observe the great blessings promised to humility, or lowliness of mind, and true piety; and remember that the riches, honour, and life here meant are *eternal*. *Ver. 5.* To *keep the soul*, signifies to attend to those things that concern our everlasting happiness. *Ver. 6.* All parents, of every rank and degree, should observe this precept; many a child grows up in wickedness from being neglected and set wrong at first. *Ver. 10.* Those who keep company with people that despise God and religion often get into quarrels which can only be prevented by shunning such company. *Ver. 13.* Labour is here compared to a *lion*, because idle people think work would kill them. *Ver. 15.* All children stand in need of correction, and it is the duty of parents to give it them to prevent their growing up in wickedness. *Ver. 17 to 22.* Observe, in these verses, *for what end* the Proverbs of Solomon were written, and resolve to study them attentively that you may benefit by them. *Ver. 22.* Observe, what care the LORD takes of the poor, and if you are one of the number rejoice in his goodness

ness and trust in his promises. *Ver. 24.* Such people as we are here cautioned against are usually very bad to make friendship with. Observe, *ver. 25,* for what reason we should avoid their intimacy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 9, contain advice against being dainty and gluttonous in respect to eating and drinking; and they caution us against a covetous desire of wealth. *Ver. 9 to 12,* signify that we should do nothing to injure others, especially the *fatherless*, Observe, *ver. 11,* WHO is their protector. *Ver. 13.* Observe how frequently the wise man recommends the correction of children: he here speaks of it as the only way to deliver their souls from everlasting destruction; but remember that Solomon could not intend that parents should bring out the rod for every trifling fault. *Ver. 17.* If we consider seriously what must be the end of sinners if they do not repent, we certainly cannot envy them; for we are sure that they must be disappointed at last, and receive, instead of the *joy* they aim at, *everlasting punishment.* *Ver. 20, 21, &c.* It is a very dangerous thing to keep company with drunkards and gluttons. Those who do so put themselves into the way of temptation, and are in particular danger of being enticed by bad women, and of uttering oaths and blasphemies; and when once these crimes are entered upon, they generally grow into bad habits very hard to break.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1, 2. The wicked are not objects of envy when their condition is properly considered, for who would desire to change conditions with those whose end will be destruction, and who, during this life, can have no true happiness. *Ver. 3.* Religion is the only thing to be depended upon for true prosperity, for that leads to an *eternal inheritance.* *Ver. 12.* Remember that no thought, word, or action, can be hidden from God, and that he will reward the good and punish the wicked. *Ver. 14.* Think of the excellence of the reward which is kept in store for the righteous, and that it must be your own fault if you are disappointed of it, for God is true to his promises. *Ver. 16.* The *just* are those who believe

GOD's word, and endeavour to keep his commandments; they are in this world exposed to so many temptations that they frequently fall into sins; but they repent and make use of the means of grace, and are forgiven. The *wicked*, who fall into mischief, are those who set themselves against GOD, and provoke his judgments. *Ver. 17, 18*, teach us that we offend GOD if we rejoice in the evil that happens even to great sinners; we should rather be sorry that they bring the anger of GOD upon themselves. *Ver. 19* contains a maxim several times repeated by the wise man, and once by the Psalmist, which shows that it is a very common thing for people who suffer adversity to *fret at the prosperity of evil doers*: this is a fault that should be guarded against, for it indicates distrust in the Almighty, and discontent at the dispensations of his providence. *Ver. 21* conveys a most useful maxim which would oftentimes prevent much mischief in a nation if it was observed. *Ver. 22*. A change in a kingdom, or state, can seldom be brought about without a civil war, which is one of the greatest misfortunes that can fall upon a nation, and no one can tell the ruin it will bring upon all parties. To return good for evil, to live peaceably with our neighbours, minding our own business, and not meddling in other people's, or the affairs of government, is the best policy. *Ver. 30 to the end*. Observe, in these verses, the character of the slothful, and remember that man is doomed to labour in some way or other; no one who wastes his time in idleness therefore will escape unpunished; he will either live to know the want of the necessaries of this life, or the greater want of that knowledge which alone can nourish his soul to everlasting life.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 6 relate to *kings*. *Ver. 6* instructs *subjects* to honour their sovereign and to keep in their proper station. *Ver. 8 to 11*. People often put themselves to shame by getting into disputes and quarrels. *Ver. 15* signifies that patience and mild speeches will subdue anger. *Ver. 16* recommends temperance. *Ver. 21, 22*. We find the same advice, as is here given, in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chap. xii. ver. 20*. The meaning is, that our behaving in this manner
towards

towards an enemy will melt him to kindness. *Ver. 23.* This means that we should silence slanderers by letting them know we are displeased with their discourse. *Ver. 24.* Those whose misfortune it is to live with such a woman know the truth of this. *Ver. 27* signifies that it is not good to have too much of the sweets of life. *Ver. 28* shows that it is a great weakness for a man not to be master over himself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 2 signifies that curses hurt only those who utter them ; yet how often do we hear wicked people calling for curses upon others. *Ver. 4, 5.* To *answer a fool according to his folly, &c.* signifies that in conversing with people destitute of religious principles, we should be upon our guard, and *answer them or not*, as occasion may require. *Ver. 6 to 12.* These verses show that wicked people fall into contempt. *Ver. 12.* The greatest folly, and the most difficult to cure, is self-conceit, which sets a man against good advice. *Ver. 13.* Observe how frequently Solomon describes the character of the sluggard, and how despicable he makes him appear. *Ver. 18, 19.* These verses seem to allude to persons who, for the sake of a jest, hurt the feelings of their neighbours by false tales. *Ver. 20 to 23.* A *tale-bearer* is a most dangerous person in society. *Ver. 23 to the end.* All kinds of flattery and deceit are forbidden by the Christian religion, and the wise man here shows how hateful they are in themselves.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 should remind us of the uncertainty of human life and of all things in this world. *Ver. 2.* *Self praise* is not consistent either with humility or prudence. *Ver. 5, 6.* Those who reprove us with sincerity are the truest friends. *Ver. 9, 10.* A true friend is a great treasure ; such an one sometimes has more power to help us than a near relation. *Ver. 15, 16.* Women are again taught not to give way to a quarrelsome temper. *Ver. 23, &c.* The rules which Solomon gives in this chapter concerning industry and economy should be well observed, because industry is profitable for this life ; and also, because application to some lawful business is a

means of living innocently, and a plain and industrious life is a help to piety, and an instrument of salvation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1. A person who has an evil conscience lives in continual fear, whereas a good man is always calm and steady. *Ver. 2.* This verse shows that God sometimes punishes a people in the governors of it, and that good kings and magistrates are a blessing to a state. *Ver. 3.* For *the poor to oppress the poor* is indeed a most destructive thing; they ought always to assist and comfort each other. *Ver. 5* signifies that wicked men are ignorant of the things which concern their everlasting happiness; but that those who sincerely desire to follow the commandments of God are enabled to understand all that is necessary for their salvation. *Ver. 6.* It is certainly better to be *poor and upright*, than *rich and wicked*, in respect to this world, but more especially to the next. *Ver. 9.* *Prayer* should be a solemn and sincere address to God; when it comes from the mouth of the wicked it is an affront to the Almighty. *Ver. 10.* It is a great sin to lead others into breaking God's commandments, which those commit who entice people from their duty in any way. Many a youth, and many a man and woman, has been led astray by the enticements of neighbours, fellow-workmen, or fellow servants. Every one has sins enough of his own to answer for, and should take care not to make himself in any degree chargeable for those of other people. *Ver. 13.* However men may hide their sins from one another they cannot conceal them from God; but though God knows them, he requires, as a condition of pardon, that we should confess them before him. *Ver. 14.* Those who have the fear of God always before their eyes, are careful to avoid offending God; but those who harden their hearts against this fear are tempted by Satan into a thousand snares. *Ver. 15.* A ruler of this kind is seldom sent but upon a very wicked nation. From the latter part of this chapter we learn that idleness produces misery; that justice is to be exercised without partiality; that envy and avarice only make men miserable; that those who reprove us are most deserving of our love; that it is a great sin in children to steal from their parents; that a high
opinion

opinion of ourselves is a sign of extreme folly ; and that those who give to the poor will never want, but that the uncharitable will be accursed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1. To *harden the neck* signifies to be obstinate against reproof. *Ver. 5.* *Flattery is a snare* which every wise person will shun. *Ver. 6.* Every kind of temptation to sin is a snare. *Ver. 8.* *Scornful men* signify those who despise religion and government. *Ver. 9.* It is best to avoid disputes, whether in anger or in jest, with a wicked man. *Ver. 15.* It is very cruel in parents to let their children grow up without proper correction, because the young are not able to correct their own faults. *Ver. 17.* Parents should remember what the wise man says here. *Ver. 19.* It too often happens, as the wise man observes in this verse, that a servant will not bear to be told of his faults ; but it ought to be otherwise, according to a servant's duty. At the same time masters and mistresses should not be hasty and passionate towards their domestics, but should keep in mind that they themselves have a master in heaven ; see *Ephesians*, vi. 9. *Ver. 22.* This verse shows that it is very sinful to give way to a passionate temper. *Ver. 23.* Pride is another fault which should be carefully checked. *Ver. 24.* To *enter into partnership with a thief* is a sure way of hurting the soul. *Ver. 25.* *Fear not them*, says our blessed Saviour, *who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, *Matthew*, x. 28. The only way to be always under the protection of the Almighty is to fear the LORD, and live uprightly, that is, according to God's commandments.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 7. By the insertion of Agur's words in the Book of Proverbs, we may conclude he was an inspired prophet, though no mention is made of him in any other part of Scripture. What he here says concerning man's meanness and God's omnipotence, should give us a lively sense of our own weakness, of the divine majesty, and our dependance upon God. *Ver. 7 to 10.* This is called the prayer of Agur ; it is suited

suit to persons in the middle station of life, and should lead such as are exempted from the peculiar temptations of *indigence* and *affluence*, to be contented and thankful; but both rich and poor are reminded by it of the dangers to which they are exposed, which should put them respectively upon their guard against the sins of *presumption* on the one hand, and *dishonesty* and *habitual swearing* on the other; for God is able to bring down the highest, and to help the poor and needy, so that the one has no cause to be proud, nor the other to take to bad courses.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 6. King Lemuel is supposed to have been Solomon himself. The advice, in these verses, relate chiefly to the duty of kings; but every person should observe what is said respecting *chastity* and *sobriety*. *Ver. 6, 7.* Strong drink among the Jews, in Solomon's time, was a kind of spiced wine. Dram drinking is a modern invention; labouring men therefore must not think from these verses, that hard work justifies drunkenness; a man may be so refreshed as to forget his poverty, without swallowing that which may be called *liquid fire*, for it burns their inside like fire. A drunkard may indeed forget his poverty for a time, but not in the comfortable way a sober man does; for the former makes a beast of himself, and when he recollects that he has made his poverty greater than it was, he has double cause to lament it. *Ver. 8.* *Open thy mouth for the dumb*, signifies speak for those who are not able to speak for themselves in matters which concern their interest or their happiness. It may be done even for poor dumb beasts, either by speaking to their riders or drivers, when we see them cruelly used; or by informing their owners of this cruel treatment. An angel once spake in favour of an ass, and gave the poor beast speech, that she might herself reproach her barbarous master; see *Numbers, chap. xxii.* *Ver. 10 to 30.* These verses point out the qualities which render women praise-worthy, namely, love for their husbands and children, industry and good management in their households, discretion in their words and actions, and the fear of the LORD. *Ver. 11* shows that a woman's behaviour to her husband should be such that he may consider her in the light of a most faithful friend and helpmate.

helpmate. *Ver. 12.* It certainly is a great reproach to any woman to *do evil to her husband*, whose happiness it is her duty to promote. *Ver. 13, 14.* These verses intimate that a good wife will consider by what means she can help her husband in maintaining and providing for the family. *Ver. 15* shows that a woman who wishes to do this must be an early riser. *Ver. 16.* Every woman has it not in her power to purchase a field with the labour of her hands; but many a *poor woman* can keep her children from the cold by the very employment recommended, *ver. 19*, spinning flax and wool. *Ver. 22.* Though she cannot clothe herself in rich and fashionable attire she may earn clothes fit for her condition in life. *Ver. 23.* She may help, by her care and industry, to make her husband respectable in his appearance. *Ver. 26.* She may be prudent and kind in her conversation. *Ver. 27.* She may bring up her children in industry, and teach them their duty to God and man. The woman who does her duty in this manner is beloved both by her husband and her children, and how much must it delight her to gain not only their approbation, but the favour of God, as she certainly will do if she has a regard for his holy laws in her words and actions. *Ver. 31.* *Give her of the fruits of her hands, &c.* signifies, let her have the praise that is justly due to her, and hold her out as a pattern to her sex. Mothers, in particular, should be careful to make this portion of Scripture familiar to their daughters, as a pattern which all ought to follow when they enter the married state. How much happier would they be than those young women who become wives and mothers without having been taught to reflect on the important duties they are solemnly engaged to perform.

ECCLESIASTES; or, THE PREACHER.

THIS Book was written by king Solomon in the latter part of his reign; the design of it was to expose the vanity of human life, and show that the only way to be happy is to fear GOD and keep his commandments.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 2. The meaning of the words *vanity of vanities* is, that nothing in this world can be depended upon for true and lasting happiness. *Ver. 3.* The world was not made for any one man, or generation of men, but for the use of *one generation after another*, who were each to leave the world for those that should come after them, and not to carry any thing out of it; therefore it is said that *a man has no profit*. *Ver. 4 to 12* signify only that the earth affords the same things to every race of mankind as they succeed one another, and that there is nothing in it which can fully satisfy the soul. *Ver. 12 to 18.* In the beginning of his reign Solomon prayed for wisdom, and GOD granted his request, so that he was the wisest of men; but according to the account he gives of himself in this Book he did not long continue to make a good use of this valuable gift; for after he had written his Proverbs he gave up his mind to the vanities of the world, instead of studying the commandments of GOD as he ought to have done, therefore he found *vexation of spirit* in having so much knowledge. Those who are wise should learn, from Solomon's example, that human knowledge will not give happiness unless it is properly used; and those who are ignorant should learn from it to be contented, since they can attain without this knowledge *true wisdom*, which consists in the knowledge of GOD and their duty.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 12. These verses afford an useful lesson both to the *rich* and the *poor*. How apt are the former to employ their riches in the same way as Solomon did! How prone
are

are the *latter* to envy those whose life appears to them to pass away in nothing but gaiety and pleasure ! Solomon, however, shows that those who employ their riches with such worldly sensual views experience nothing but disappointment. Could the poorest person upon earth, who leads a religious virtuous life, know the fatigues which people of fortune living in this way endure, and the painful reflections that torment their minds in their hours of retirement, they would rejoice in their own happier lot, whilst they eat the bread earned by the sweat of their brow. Riches are a blessing only to those who make a good use of them ; neither is any enjoyment worthy to be called pleasure which the conscience cannot approve. *Ver. 12 to the end.* From these verses we find that Solomon had endeavoured to account for the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the good in this life, and that he had taken a disgust to this world because of the vanity and vexation he found in it. If he had considered the world in another view, as a state of trial in the way to a better, no such thoughts would have troubled him. We should learn from this chapter to seek true wisdom, and to moderate our desires after the good things of this life, and to avoid those excessive cares that render a person miserable, and rob him of peace of mind here, and of the happiness of the world to come.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 16. These verses show that all things in this world have their season, and are liable to change. We should therefore learn from them that it is best to be contented, and to apply ourselves to well doing. What Solomon teaches us concerning the inconstancy and the continual change of worldly things, and of the life of man, should convince us that solid happiness is not to be found in things fleeting and transitory. This should excite us to act wisely, to make a good use of time, and of the opportunities that offer of procuring this happiness. It is our duty, as well as happiness, to submit in all things to Divine Providence.

Ver. 16 to the end. These verses teach us that whatever confusion and disorder we observe in this world, God knows every thing that is done in it, and that if men in any station

are

are guilty of injustice God will call them to account for it. *Ver. 19.* Solomon here speaks only in relation to the death of the body, for in this very chapter, *ver. 17,* he speaks of a future judgment as one of the appointed times. Let us remember then to use the things of this present life with moderation, and apply ourselves above all things to fear and please God.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 4. The wise man's observation that the innocent are oppressed and comfortless, is a proof of the vanity of this world; but it proves also that there is a God who will reward every man according to his works, therefore we must not judge men to be happy or miserable by what befalls them here. *Ver. 4.* The envy one man bears towards another is a further proof of the vanity of this life; but this passion ought to be banished from the heart, since it only serves to torment us unprofitably, and make us uncharitable to our neighbours, and unthankful to God. The latter part of this chapter shows that there is much vanity in the judgments of men, and therefore we are not to depend upon happiness from earthly things.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. To keep the foot, &c. signifies to go with reverence into the house of God as into a place where God is present in a peculiar manner. *The sacrifice of fools* means prayer offered up in the LORD's house without devotion, and the paying no attention to the preacher. *Ver. 2.* Those people are *rash with their mouth* who whisper in church about worldly business or trifling things; no words should be said in that sacred place but those of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. *Ver. 6* speaks of angels as present in God's house. *Ver. 7* shows that dreams are not to be depended upon. *Ver. 8* should encourage those who suffer oppression to put their trust in God. *Ver. 10 to 18* show that riches and pomp can neither prolong life nor make a man more happy, but on the contrary they produce much trouble and anxiety; and that people who get their living by labour enjoy more sweet repose than those who possess great estates, for the more
men

men have, the more their cares increase. *Ver. 18 to the end.* We must not understand from these verses that we should give way to sensuality and pleasures. Solomon's meaning is only this, that when God grants us wealth we ought to receive and possess it as his gracious gift, and use it with sobriety and gratitude, but never to place our happiness in it. This agrees with the precepts of the Gospel.

CHAPTER VI.

The reflections which Solomon makes in this chapter are very proper to moderate the eagerness of men's pursuits after earthly goods. The vanity of their labours appears not only in their not knowing how to enjoy the good things they are so anxious to obtain, but chiefly in this, that they are deprived of some of the greatest blessings of life, ease and a contented spirit, and cannot secure themselves any thing future. But the Gospel gives us still clearer directions on this head by teaching us to look forward to another life.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1. It is very desirable to leave a *good name* behind us when we die. *Ver. 2 to 7.* It is certainly more profitable to the soul to be put in mind of death than to pass life away in gaiety and pleasure without any serious thoughts of our latter end; and there is a *godly sorrow* which leads to true and lasting joy; but it is not required of us to spend our whole lives in weeping and mourning. There is, as Solomon says in another chapter, *A time to weep and a time to rejoice*; but we should never join in the mirth of *fools*, that is, *wicked or careless people*, who have no thoughts of hereafter, for this certainly is nothing but vanity. *Ver. 7.* To be oppressed and ill treated is a great trial to a good man, but patience will carry him through it. *Ver. 9.* A good man may be made angry, but a wicked one alone will suffer anger to rest with him. *Ver. 10.* It is impossible for us to know exactly how former times were. *Ver. 14.* This is an excellent rule, and those who follow it turn both prosperity and adversity to their profit. It is no trial indeed to *rejoice at good fortune*, but it should be with *thankfulness to God*; and troubles and calamities do not always lead people as they ought

ought to do, to *consider* for what end they are sent, namely, for correction and improvement, or for the trial of virtue. *Ver. 15* teaches us that we should not be staggered in our faith if at any time we see the wicked prosperous in this world. *Ver. 16*. To be *righteous over much*, does not mean that we can be too good, only that we should not be too strict in the defence of our own right, or too rigid in judging others. *Ver. 17 to 21*. All men are liable to sin, and upon repentance they obtain pardon, but those who give themselves up to a wicked life often die in their sins. *Ver. 21, 22*. We are here taught that we should not be too inquisitive nor make ourselves uneasy in respect to what others may say of us, as we may recollect having said things of others we may wish unsaid. *Ver. 23*. These verses show that though Solomon was the wisest of men, there were things beyond his finding out. He wanted at that time, as it appears, to understand *good and evil* by his own *natural reason*, which can only be known by divine revelation; in consequence of which he was probably drawn by his wives into those idolatries by which he so greatly offended the LORD, for he evidently alludes to his *thousand wives* in the 28th verse, as he does to the false religions of the heathens in the 29th verse. Solomon before this spake of good and virtuous women; *Many daughters have done virtuously*, *Proverbs, chap. xxxi. 29*; but his wives, on whom he here passes such severe censure, all came from heathen nations. Observe, particularly, *ver. 29*, that we are not to ascribe the depravity and sinfulness of human nature to GOD.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 6. The meaning of these verses is, that we should pay to kings the reverence due to them and be obedient to the laws. *Ver. 6 to 11*. These verses show that we should make a good use of *time*, since we know not what will happen. *Ver. 11 to 14*. The unequal distribution of good and evil in this world is a proof of the vanity of things below; but we must look for the end in a future state where every one will receive the just recompence of his deeds. *Ver. 15*. It must have been in Solomon's days of impiety and luxury, that he entertained these sentiments. A moderate enjoyment of the fruits of our labour GOD allows us,
but

but not to give up our time to eating and drinking and idle mirth, to the neglect of the *one thing needful*. *Ver. 16 to the end.* These verses should teach us that it is much wiser to be contented with what GOD has seen fit to reveal, than to endeavour to penetrate into the things he has hidden from us. *Secret things*, says Moses, *belong unto God, but those that are revealed are for us and our children.* *Deuteronomy, chap. xxix. ver. 29.*

CHAPTER IX.

We must, in this chapter, consider Solomon for the most part as declaring what his thoughts were when he was striving to find out and to account for every thing by his own *natural reason*. He did not at that time take a future state into his account, therefore it appeared to him that the *good* had no advantage over the *wicked*. We see here into what errors even the wisest man that ever lived fell, when he did not take the revealed word of GOD for his guide: this should teach us to be humble and lowly in our own eyes, and to pray to GOD to help our understanding with his Holy Spirit. *Ver. 18.* Observe these words, and take care not to be one of those sinners that *destroy much good*.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1. The meaning of this verse is that a single instance of remarkably bad conduct often destroys the character of one who was before renowned for wisdom. *Ver. 2, 3,* signify that when the heart is right a man acts right, but that the wicked do wrong things, for want of a good heart. *Ver. 4, 5,* teach us that persons in common life should submit to the rulers of the land. *Ver. 6, 7.* Such things, as are here mentioned, have been seen in our own times, and may be seen now in a neighbouring nation; and the consequence has been such as *ver. 8, 9,* describe; the government is tyrannical, arbitrary, and cruel, to the greatest degree; and the people are downright slaves. The serpent may truly be said to have bitten those who, in that country, trusted to his deceitful wiles. *Ver. 16, 17,* show on the one hand the disadvantage it is of to a nation to have an unsteady and inexperienced king, and nobles given

up to luxury; and on the other hand, the happiness of a nation which has a wise and gracious king, and ministers of state, who attend to the duties of their office rather than to feasting and revelling. *Ver. 20.* This verse should caution all who read it, as they value their own safety, not to utter vilifying words, even in the most secret place, against the king who governs the nation, or other characters in exalted stations, as these things usually come to light, and it is a sin to speak evil of dignities; see *2 Peter. ii. 10*; *Jude, 8.*

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1, 2. These verses recommend charity and liberality in relieving the necessities of others, and show that such good deeds will in the end meet with a reward. *Ver. 4 to 7* advise the doing these things without delay, as we cannot tell whether we shall have life or opportunity to do them hereafter; and this rule should be observed in respect to every duty. *Ver. 7, 8.* These verses show that the most prosperous life must have an end. *Ver. 9.* Young people are here admonished to be moderate in the enjoyment of innocent pleasures, and always to keep in mind that they will be called to account hereafter for the manner in which their whole lives have been spent.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1. To remember our Creator in the days of youth, signifies to apply diligently to the study of God's holy laws, and to get a habit of living in obedience to them before the season of old age arrives, in which there is most commonly much decrepitude and weariness. The following verses describe, by lively comparisons, the evils of old age. *Ver. 2.* Sometimes the understanding is darkened by a decay of the memory. *Ver. 3.* The head and arms tremble with palsy, the feeble knees bend under the weight of the body, the teeth decay and drop out, or become useless, the eyes grow dim. *Ver. 4.* Business is no longer transacted, the voice is so low as to be scarcely heard, and the sweetest music loses its charms to the deaf ear. *Ver. 5.* The mind becomes timorous, every little exertion is troublesome, and all desires for earthly pleasures cease; and nothing is to be looked for here but death. This certainly

is not the proper season for men to *begin to remember their Creator*; but all the evils here enumerated will be patiently, and even chearfully, borne by those aged persons who, from their youth, have endeavoured to prepare for their latter end. *Ver. 6.* Another kind of comparison begins here: the body of the aged is compared to a water-engine, in which the parts that supply the water are broken, and the whole machine becomes uselefs. *Ver. 7.* When the human body is thus shattered it returns to the dust from whence it was taken, and the *soul*, or *spirit*, returns into the hands of God to be disposed of as he sees fit; how that is, we know from the New Testament. *Ver. 8.* Were this life the whole of our existence, all would indeed be *vanity of vanities*; but in the following verses Solomon carries his reflections to the things which are necessary to be taught to the people, and comes at last to this conclusion, that a few well chosen books are sufficient for the general purposes of life, and that deep study is a very fatiguing thing, and if not directed to some great and good end may be ranked among the *vanities of life*. *Ver. 13, 14.* These verses call for our most serious attention, as they show that nothing can give true happiness in this world but RELIGION, and that this consists in *keeping God's commandments*, not in any fanciful schemes of man's invention. *Ver. 14.* By the commandments, as written in Scripture, we must therefore abide, since by them we shall hereafter be judged, and receive a reward accordingly as we have kept or broken them; for our Saviour says, *Those that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and those who have done evil into everlasting fire.* See *Matt. chap. xxv. 46.*

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

THIS Book is understood to relate to Christ and his church, but being all in figurative language it is not easy to explain it; you may therefore pass it over, without puzzling yourself to understand it, as all which it is designed to teach us is taught in plainer words in the other parts of Scripture.

ISAIAH.

THE Prophet Isaiah lived nearly 800 years before the coming of our SAVIOUR, and prophesied about sixty years in the kingdom of Judah. In this Book there are many predictions relating to the Jews, and other neighbouring nations, and it is to be observed that of all the Prophets Isaiah has spoken most clearly concerning our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, of his sufferings, of his kingdom, and the *calling of the Gentiles*.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, *ver. 1*, in what king's reign Isaiah prophesied, and how suitable to the circumstances of those times the solemn address in this chapter was. By *the head and heart, ver. 5, 6*, were meant the king and the other governors of the land; and by *putrifying sores*, corrupt principles. The *daughter of Zion, ver. 8*, signified the church of God in Jerusalem. The Prophet called the rulers of Judah *rulers of Sodom*, and the people of Judah people of Sodom on account of their abominable wickedness. By *the faithful city having become a harlot, ver. 21*, was meant that Jerusalem, whose inhabitants were once faithful to the Lord, had forsaken the true God to worship idols. Remember that idolatry is frequently called in the language of prophecy *fornication and adultery*. The *dross and tin, ver. 26*, that the Lord would take away, were corrupt principles. The *oaks and gardens, ver. 29*, of which they were to be made ashamed, were those in which they worshipped idols. Observe, how the Prophet reproved the Jews in general for their extreme corruption, and the judgment which the Lord threatened to send upon them if they would not repent and amend their ways. Even the very sacrifices and ceremonies which the Lord himself had ordained were become abominable in his sight, because the people led such wicked lives. Observe, also, how kindly the Lord, by his Prophet, invited them to repentance.

All persons, of whatever rank or degree, who read this chapter should apply to themselves the Prophet's exhortation, by considering in the first place whether the crimes here pointed out to the Jewish nation prevail in the nation to which they belong; and in the next place, whether they themselves are guilty of them, that they may be led to repentance and amendment of life, not for their own sakes only, but for the good of their country; for every individual contributes by his own conduct either to the *righteousness* or the *wickedness* of the nation to which he belongs: when true religion is kept up, and the people pay due regard to virtue and morality, it is a righteous nation, and the blessing of God attends it; but when the divine ordinances and commandments are disregarded, and vice is countenanced and encouraged, it is a wicked nation, and liable to the just judgments of God, which will certainly fall upon it if the people do not repent and turn from their evil ways.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 6. By the mountain of the Lord's house, *ver. 2*, was meant the kingdom of the Messiah, which will hereafter be fully established according to the prediction of the Prophet, and the church of Christ will then be in a most glorious state.

Ver. 6 to 10. Observe, that it was on account of their wickedness the Lord forsook his people; they had first forsaken him to worship idols, and fallen into other bad practices of the heathen nations before the Lord threatened them with his judgments.

Ver. 10 to the end. *The day of the Lord of Hosts, ver. 11*, signifies the time when the Lord will come to judgment. At that awful day, not only the Jews, but all who have been the chosen people of the Lord, that is, all who have been received into the church of Christ, will be made to feel the effects of God's displeasure if they have forsaken the Lord, and set up idols in their hearts; which those do, who give themselves up to follow the desires of the flesh, or the pomps and vanities of this world, instead of loving God with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, in these verses, that GOD punishes wicked nations sometimes by famine and drought, that is, by causing a scarcity of bread and water, and sometimes by setting over them rulers that know not how to govern well.

Ver. 9 to 16. Observe here, that the people of Israel gloried in their crimes. Observe also, the LORD's promise to the good, and his threatening to the wicked, which were meant for God's people in all future ages of the world, as well as for the Jews.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe, in these verses, the vanity and extravagance of the Jewish women who in their dress followed every ridiculous fashion without regard to that modesty and decorum which every woman ought to observe. Christian women should pay particular attention to this part of Isaiah's prophecy, and consider whether, in their dress at the present day, they do not follow the example of those of Israel and Judah, wearing what is very improper for them to appear in as Christians, and very unsuitable to their station in life; and all should remember what was threatened to the daughters of Zion that they may not, by their pride and luxury, help to bring down the judgments of GOD upon the nations to which they respectively belong.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter the Prophet foretold that in those calamitous times, which he had before predicted, the Jewish nation should be greatly diminished, but that GOD would preserve a remnant of them, and restore them in his appointed time to Jerusalem; and afterwards into the Christian church.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 8. By the *vineyard*, as we may understand from *ver. 7*, was meant the nation of the Israelites, whom the Lord had chosen as his own peculiar people, and separated from all the other nations of the earth, by giving them peculiar laws and ordinances. By the *grapes* he expected, were meant obedience to God's holy laws and ordinances; the
wild

wild grapes signified wicked practices, directly contrary to his precepts and commandments.

Ver. 8 to 26. Observe, in these verses, what crimes particularly bring God's judgments upon a nation, namely, covetousness, an inordinate desire of riches, drunkenness, the love of mirth, feasting and pleasures, security and a contempt of the divine threatenings, impious opinions and discourses, and unjust judgments.

Ver. 26 to the end. Observe here, that the LORD threatened to make use of other nations as instruments of his divine vengeance against the Jews; and we learn from the *2d Book of Kings*, the *2d of Chronicles*, and the *Book of Jeremiah*, that God permitted the Assyrians to carry many of them into captivity, and afterwards to destroy the holy city and temple. Christians, who read this chapter, should consider well how far they are guilty or innocent of those sins against which woe was denounced by the Prophet, for as surely as God punished his ancient people, the Israelites, so surely will he punish all nations that offend after the like manner; not that every wicked person will be punished in this life, but where crimes are multiplied so that a nation is arrived at the height of wickedness, these woes will be executed upon it.

CHAPTER VI.

The reign of Uzziah king of Judah, is written in the *2d Book of Kings*, chap. xv. he is there called Azariah. It is also written in the *26th chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles*, where he is called Uzziah.

Observe, that the Prophet had in a vision a view of the glory of the Lord: though it is impossible, without an actual sight of it, fully to conceive what this appearance was, we may form some faint idea of it from the Prophet's description, and we should learn from it to adore the divine majesty. The design of this vision was to confirm Isaiah in his office, as a Prophet, and prepare him to do and to speak as the LORD commanded. *Ver. 9, 10.* Observe here, that the Jews were threatened to be punished with spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, on account of their refusing to hear and consider what his Prophets were sent to tell them. This is the most dreadful of all punishments upon earth, and is

never inflicted but upon those who wilfully harden themselves against the means which GOD affords to enlighten their minds and instruct them in their duty. The 13th verse related to the remnant of the Jews, but cannot be easily explained.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 14. The history of the reign of Ahaz, king of Israel is written in the 16th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, and the 28th chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles. The house of David signified Ahaz and the royal family. The history of Ahaz shows that after this prophecy Ahaz continued his abominations, on which account the two kings who had confederated against him, were permitted to succeed in other parts of his dominions, though they were not suffered to go against Jerusalem; and that a great number of Jews were carried captive to Damascus, the chief city of the king of Syria; see 2 Chron. chap. xxviii. Observe, that the Lord, speaking by his Prophet, offered to give Ahaz a sign to convince him that these predictions came from him; but he refused it from pretended reverence for the Lord, yet he was not afraid to offend him by his idolatries. This shows that Ahaz was a hypocrite. Observe, the goodness of the Lord at this time in sending Isaiah to Ahaz, though he was a wicked and idolatrous king.

Ver. 14 to 17. Observe here, a remarkable prophecy relating to the miraculous birth of our Saviour which was fulfilled when he was born of the Virgin Mary; see the Gospel of St. Matthew, chap. i. The name Immanuel signifies God with us.

Ver. 17 to the end. These verses had a relation to some of the Lord's judgments which were to fall upon the kingdom of Judah by means of the people of Egypt and Assyria, all which soon came to pass.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 19. In these verses Isaiah continues to prophesy that the attempts of the kings of Syria and Israel would be in vain, and that the Assyrians should come against these two kingdoms and pass on even to the kingdom of Judah.

Ver.

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe, that the Prophet here exhorts the Jews to put their whole trust in the LORD, to fear none but him, to cleave to his word, and not go to forcerers or idols; and he foretold the desolation of the Jews who dwelt in Galilee. All that was foretold by the Prophet came exactly to pass, as we may learn from *2 Kings, chap. xvi.* Christians should learn from the latter part of this chapter, that it is sinful to consult fortune tellers and conjurors, and that the people of God should have no other dependance, or rule of faith, than his word.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 8. As some of these verses relate only to the affairs of the Jews it is not necessary to study for the meaning of them; but there are other verses which evidently relate to CHRIST and his Gospel. The prophecy, *ver. 1, 2,* was fulfilled when our blessed Saviour went to live at Capernaum, and brought salvation to light by preaching the Gospel; see *Matthew, chap. iv.* *Ver. 6, 7,* certainly relate to CHRIST, whose glory, divinity, and eternal kingdom, are here described in a clear and remarkable manner. Observe, *ver. 6,* by what titles the child here prophesied of was to be called, which could only belong to God. Observe also, *ver. 7,* that this wonderful child was to rule over an everlasting kingdom.

Ver. 13 to the end. Observe here, that the LORD knowing the house of Israel would continue disobedient, notwithstanding the pains which the Prophets took to reform them, threatened to bring heavy judgments upon them for their hypocrisy and impenitence.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, in these verses, that none can oppress the poor, the widow, or the fatherless, without bringing the curse of God upon themselves.

Ver. 5 to 20. The Assyrian, *ver. 5,* signified the king of Assyria and his mighty armies. What is said, *ver. 7,* of the Assyrian was true, in respect to several of the kings who reigned one after the other: Pul, Tiglath-pileser, Senacherib, Efarhadden, and Nebuchadnezzar. These mighty conquerors,

querors, whose hearts were bent upon destroying other nations, little thought that in respect to the Almighty Governor of the Universe, they, with their numerous armies, were no more than *the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation*. The nations they wished to conquer had provoked the wrath of the LORD OF HOSTS, therefore he permitted these conquerors to prevail against them; but from *ver. 12* we understand that when they had done all that the LORD himself saw fit to be done, these kings, one after the other, with their respective armies were punished, because they themselves were guilty of the most presumptuous sins. They insulted the LORD GOD by defying his power and ranking him with idols, as may be seen in the *2d Book of Kings and the 2d Book of Chronicles*.

Ver. 20 to 28. Observe, in these verses, the promises of GOD for the comfort of such of his faithful people of the house of Israel as had kept to their duty, and had not worshipped idols. See the fulfilment of these gracious promises in the *37th chapter of Isaiah, and the 19th of the 2d Book of Kings*.

Ver. 28 to the end. These verses contain a prophetic description of the march of Senacherib towards Jerusalem, the terrors he would occasion in the places he passed through, and how the mighty tyrant would be suddenly stopped and laid low by the hand of the LORD OF HOSTS, the GOD of Israel.

From this chapter we learn how GOD, as ruler of the universe, acts in respect to wicked nations, making one a scourge to others in order to bring about the designs of his providence, and punishing them in their turn for their evil deeds; because the ends they propose are only to gratify their own passions, not to fulfil the designs of Providence. Observe, that the LORD did not make those kings and nations *wicked*, he only made them instruments of his vengeance.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter relates chiefly to the kingdom of the Messiah. By *the rod from the stem of Jesse, ver. 1*, was meant CHRIST, who was to be of the family of Jesse, the father of David. Observe, here, that the Prophet foretold that the SPIRIT of
GOD

GOD would always be in CHRIST. Observe also, that he was to rule his kingdom with righteousness and equity.

Ver. 6 to 10. These figurative expressions denote the power of the Gospel in changing the hearts, tempers, and lives of the worst men, who are here compared to wild beasts; and the good to tame, gentle animals, and innocent children. These verses chiefly relate to the most glorious state of CHRIST's kingdom upon earth when all mankind will be Christians.

Ver. 10 to the end. These verses seem to refer chiefly to the Jews after their several dispersions, and to that happy period when the Jews and Gentiles shall, as fellow Christians, unite their zeal in extending Christ's kingdom upon earth. These predictions have been in part fulfilled, but they will not be completed till *the whole earth shall become the kingdom of the LORD and of his CHRIST*. But every Christian may contribute towards its accomplishment by submitting to the laws of the Gospel, and living in peace and unity, and leading a holy life.

CHAPTER XII.

This short chapter is a hymn of praise suitable for all who partake of the blessings of the Church of CHRIST.

CHAPTER XIII.

The chapters before this related to the state of the Jews in the reign of Ahaz, and foretold what would befall them in the kingdom of Judah. This and the following chapters contain prophecies against the nations who would afflict the people of GOD.

Ver. 1 to 6. By *ver. 1*, it appears that Isaiah had a vision of what he relates, in which he beheld the standard of the LORD of Hosts set up on a high mountain, and saw nations flocking from all parts to execute the purposes of his vengeance against Babylon.

Ver. 6 to 10. The Prophet here describes the terror and dismay of those who were the objects of divine wrath.

Ver. 11 to the end. In these verses GOD himself speaks by the Prophet, declaring that he will certainly destroy Babylon. These divine threatenings are very dreadful, and they were fully

fully executed against Babylon. The Almighty declared, *ver. 17*, that he would send the Medes against this great nation. At the time this prophecy was given, the Babylonish empire was in the most flourishing condition, and the prophecy was not accomplished till 200 years afterwards, when the Prophet Daniel was living in Babylon, to which place he was carried captive. God declared, *ver. 20*, that after the total overthrow of Babylon it should never be inhabited, &c.; this prediction was exactly fulfilled, for the place where it stood can no longer be known. We are here to remark, particularly, the divine justice against the Babylonians, who had so unjustly oppressed the Jews. God permitted them to afflict and destroy those who had departed from his worship, and given themselves up to idolatry, but he preserved his church, the remnant of his faithful people, and made their conquerors themselves instruments of their preservation by carrying them into another country. This chapter helps to throw light on the history of Belshazzar in the *5th chapter of Daniel*.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe that, in these verses, the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity is foretold. This prediction was written 130 years before the captivity took place.

Ver. 4 to the end. This is a triumphant hymn suitable for the Jews on their deliverance from captivity, and it is at the same time a prophecy describing beforehand the character of the Babylonians, at the time God would bring his judgments upon them; and a very remarkable circumstance is foretold, *ver. 23*, that the great and pompous city of Babylon should become pools of water, and a place for wild beasts, which actually came to pass, and it continues so to this day; and the exact place where Babylon stood cannot for this reason be found.

Ver. 29 to the end. These verses contain a prophecy which related to Jewish affairs, and it cannot at this time be clearly understood.

From the whole chapter we may learn, that how great soever the power of the kings of the earth, and the enemies of his church may be, they never can hold out against God, and that he will in the end confound the proud and the unjust.

CHAPTERS XV, XVI.

In these chapters Isaiah prophesied against the Moabites. We have here another instance of a nation being punished for its pride, and the injuries they had done the people of God; and also, a further proof of the care which God in all ages takes of his church.

CHAPTER XVII.

This prophecy relates not only to Damascus, which was the capital of the kingdom of Syria, but to Samaria, at that time the capital of the kingdom of Israel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This very obscure chapter is supposed to have been delivered to messengers sent upon some public embassy to the Jews.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter is a prophecy against the Egyptians, which was remarkably fulfilled, as the history shows. The fierce king, *ver.* 4, was Alexander the Great. The Egyptians made use of a particular kind of reed to write upon, and they lived very much upon fish. Egypt was famous for its manufacture of fine linen.

CHAPTER XX.

This prophecy was designed to warn the Jews not to depend upon the Egyptians, but to trust in God alone. There is no reason to suppose that Isaiah went without his upper garment, and barefooted for three whole years, but that he repeated this prophecy at different times for three successive years, and appeared in that manner whenever he did so.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 11. These verses contain a very remarkable prophecy which related to the taking of Babylon. *Ver.* 2. God calls upon the Persians and Medes, under the names of Elam and Media, to besiege it. *Ver.* 4, expressly mentions that

that the city should be taken in the night when the king of Babylon was feasting and taking his pleasure. The couple of horsemen, *ver. 7 and 9*, signified Darius, king of the Medes, and Cyrus, Prince of Persia, who were to besiege and take Babylon. This came to pass in the reign of Belshazzar; *see Daniel, chapter v.* Babylon at that time was full of idolatry.

Ver. 11 to the end. The Arabians, to whom this prophecy related, were of the posterity of the Ishmaelites. Great judgments were threatened upon them which doubtless came to pass.

CHAPTER XXII.

Observe, that the Prophet having foretold in the foregoing chapters the destruction of those idolatrous people who oppressed the Jews: he here denounces the miseries which would befall the Jews themselves.

Ver. 1 to 15. This prophecy foretells the invasion of Jerusalem by the Assyrians under Senacherib, or by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, or probably both, for they agree with both these events.

Ver. 15 to 22. The prediction concerning Shebna and Eliakim was fulfilled; *see chapter xxxvi. ver. 22.*

Ver. 22 to the end. These verses relate to the Assyrians.

From this chapter we learn that one of the greatest signs of hardness of heart in a nation, and that which most provokes God to punish it is, their being unmindful of his judgments, and giving themselves up to mirth and pleasure, and dissoluteness, at a time when he calls them to humiliation and repentance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Tyre was a very famous place at the time this prophecy was written. Its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar is here denounced. This prediction was delivered at least 125 years before its accomplishment, when such an event was, to all human appearance, very unlikely to happen.

Ver. 1 to 15. Tarshish, *ver. 1*, was a place much frequented by the Tyrian traders and sailors. Tyre is called the merchant's city, *ver. 11*, on account of the great trade
carried

carried on in it, and its being the resort of merchants from all parts of the world.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that it was here foretold that after seventy years Tyre should recover its splendour, and that its trade should flourish again; that it is called an *harlot city*, because the inhabitants were idolaters. All the evils here foretold happened to Tyre; Nebuchadnezzar took the city after a tedious siege; at the end of seventy years it recovered from its ruins and became very considerable, and enjoyed its liberty in the time of Alexander the Great; after this the Jews reaped many advantages from the Tyrians, and at length the Gospel was preached in the land of Tyre, as we learn from the Evangelists.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, in the first *verse*, what the Prophet says of the power of the Lord; and in those that follow, the judgments which the Lord brings upon the earth when wickedness spreads itself amongst those who are peculiarly his people. Observe, in particular, *ver. 5*, what it is that defiles the earth, namely, *the transgressing against God's laws, changing his divine ordinances, and breaking his everlasting covenant*. Consider whether these things are not done in this nation by many who call themselves Christians, and whether they should not take warning from this prophecy.

Ver. 13 to 16 signify, that there was to be a small remnant of the people of Israel left who would be scattered over the neighbouring kingdoms, to spread there the knowledge of the true God, and pave the way for the Gospel.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe here, that God promised to establish his kingdom, and again to manifest his glory at Jerusalem, after he had afflicted it, and to show mercy to his people. These promises were in part fulfilled in the manifestation of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, and the preaching of the Gospel; but they will have a further fulfilment at his second coming.

CHAPTER XXV.

This song of praise was prepared for God's people against the time he should graciously deliver them and humble their enemies. The thanksgivings in it related first to the deliverance of the Jews, and their return from Babylon, but they also suit the great deliverance which the Messiah was to purchase for them by his death. The words of the Prophet, *ver. 8*, will not be fully accomplished till death, our last enemy, shall be destroyed by the resurrection, and JESUS CHRIST shall take his faithful servants to heaven.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter is likewise a song of praise in which temporal and spiritual blessings are intermixed. Observe, *ver. 9*, what we should learn *when the LORD's judgments are in the earth*, that is, when the LORD is sending judgments upon the nations around us, as he has been doing in a most striking manner of late years; witness the fall of so many states and kingdoms, by means of the French power, which in our days has been like that of the Assyrians of old.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In this chapter God promises by his power to punish the enemies of the Jews, to be reconciled to his people, and bring those, who should be dispersed in Assyria and Egypt, again to Jerusalem, there to worship the LORD.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. This was a prophecy against Ephraim, that is, against the ten tribes of Israel, in which it was foretold that they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies on account of their sins, but that a residue of them should be preserved.

Ver. 7 to 16. Observe here, that the priests and prophets partook of the general corruption, and were ignorant and wicked as well as the people, at the same time they deceived themselves by thinking they were secured from God's judgments.

Ver. 16 to 23. The first of these verses relates to our Saviour, as the foundation of the Christian church, intimating that

that there is no salvation but through him. In the other verses judgments were denounced against the Jews.

Ver. 23 to the end. This parable signifies that as an husbandman uses various methods in preparing his lands, and sowing it to the several sorts of seeds to be sown, with a due regard to seasons, and when he has gathered in the harvest employs different methods for separating the corn from the straw and chaff, so GOD, with unerring wisdom and impartial justice, instructs, admonishes, and corrects his people, chastises and punishes them in various ways, as the case requires, with more or less severity, but always tempers justice with mercy in order to reclaim the wicked and improve the good, and finally to separate the one from the other.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1 to 9. By Ariel, in this chapter, was meant Jerusalem. Observe, that it is here threatened with great distress. Among the heathen nations there were many who pretended to hold intercourse with familiar spirits, as mentioned *ver. 4*; and some of the Israelites had joined with the heathen in these abominations.

Ver. 9 to 15. Observe here, that the Lord threatens to punish the people of Israel with spiritual blindness, so that the word of God, whether written or spoken to them by the Prophet, should be to them as a sealed book. Observe, *ver. 13, 14*, on what account the *wisdom of the wise man was to perish* in respect to spiritual things, namely, because they *drew near to God with their lips*, pretended to worship and honour him *whilst their heart was far from him*. Under this spiritual blindness the remnant of the Israelites are at the present time; even the law of Moses is as a sealed book to them, they understand not the spiritual meaning of it, and the Scriptures of the New Testament are perfectly dark to them.

Ver. 15 to 18. Observe, in these verses, that it is great folly and extreme wickedness to pretend to hide any thing from the LORD, and to think to escape his knowledge and his power, and that nothing can screen any one from his judgments, nor hinder him from disposing of all his creatures as he sees fit.

Ver. 17 to the end. These verses relate to the times of the Gospel when the spiritual blindness which was threatened to the Jews, by the Prophet Isaiah, was to be removed. This has been partly fulfilled by the preaching of our Saviour and his Apostles, but will not have its full completion till the second Advent of our blessed Lord.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1 to 8. If this prophecy was in the first instance designed to prevent king Hezekiah from seeking help from Egypt, when threatened by the king of Assyria, it had its effect; for he did not do so, but placed his whole dependance on the power of the Lord; *see 2 Kings, chap. xix.* But Zedekiah, who reigned afterwards, did not take warning and example from it, and the ill consequences of forming an alliance with Egypt were exactly such as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold; *see Jeremiah, chap. xlii. ver. 14.*

Ver. 8 to 18. Observe, the character which the Lord, by the mouth of his Prophet, gives of the people of Judah, and that they did not wish to hear the truth, but to be flattered and upheld in their wickedness by their prophets and priests, instead of being reclaimed by them. Observe also, how they were to be punished for their presumption.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe here, the kindness which the Lord had in reserve to bestow upon the remnant of his people after they had suffered chastisement. The latter verses are referred first to the overthrow of the Assyrians, and finally to Satan, the great enemy of the church.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The people of Judah are here again warned not to seek help from Egypt; this was to be a general rule for them. Observe the promise, *ver. 4, 5*, which was fulfilled by the destruction of Senacherib's army; *see 2 Kings, chap. xix. ver. 35.*

The instruction to be drawn from this chapter is, that to put confidence in men, rather than in the divine assistance, is to sin against God, and deceive ourselves.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 9. These verses were prophetic of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom.

Ver. 9 to the end. Observe, that the women of Judah, who lived in idleness and luxury, were threatened by the Prophet with heavy judgments. There are many *careless daughters* in these days who follow their example; and as it is in the power of the women of a nation to do a great deal towards promoting the righteousness of a nation, by their own virtuous conduct, the influence they have over their husbands, and the religious education of their children; if they neglect these things they will help to bring down the judgments of God upon the nation they belong to, and will have cause to tremble for themselves.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 13. These verses contain a prophecy against the enemies of the church of God, signifying that all the designs and all the attempts of the enemies of God and his church are vain and ineffectual, and that they cannot withstand the power of the LORD, and that whatever they undertake against him turns to their own confusion.

The threatenings contained in this chapter relate in general to all wicked men. Observe, that *ver. 14* speaks of a devouring fire and *everlasting burnings*, the final punishment of the devil and those who suffer themselves to be drawn away from God and goodness. Observe, *ver. 15, 16, 17*, God's promises to the righteous. The king they shall see is the Messiah; and *the land that is not far off* from the righteous is heaven. The Jerusalem that shall never be removed is the heavenly Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

This chapter contains a denunciation of God's vengeance against all the enemies of the people or church of God. Edom and Bozrah are particularly mentioned, and the Edomites were accordingly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; *see Jeremiah, chap. xxv*: but we may be certain something

more was meant by the prophecy, as *all nations* were called upon to hear, and it is understood to relate to some great revolution that shall happen before the most perfect state of the kingdom of God upon earth shall take place.

CHAPTER XXXV.

This prophecy foretells the flourishing state of the Christian church, and the blessings God would bestow upon it by means of the MESSIAH, who will redeem and sanctify the faithful, destroy their spiritual enemies, and confer on them eternal happiness.

What is foretold, *ver. 3 to 7*, was partly fulfilled when our Saviour preached the Gospel and performed miracles, but it will have a fuller accomplishment hereafter when he comes again to conduct those whom he has redeemed to the heavenly Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

This chapter agrees with part of the *18th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*, and with the *32d chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles*. We must look upon the war which the king of Assyria made against Hezekiah, and the advantages which that idolatrous king obtained over him in the beginning, as a punishment to Hezekiah's subjects, and a trial sent by God to this pious prince, to engage him and all his people, to have recourse to him, and to give them afterwards extraordinary proofs of his almighty power in delivering them from so great a danger. It is also to be observed that the haughty and impious speech of Senacherib, and his blasphemies against God, hastened the ruin of that idolatrous king. When men fly in the face of the Almighty, and insult him with impious speeches, he fails not to set bounds to their insolence. Just such speeches have been made in our own day, by some of those who call themselves the *great nation*, but if we seek the favour of the Lord, and trust in his mercy and goodness, we may hope for deliverance.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

This chapter is exactly like the *19th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings*. In the events which are here related, we may see that

that trust in God, and fervent prayers, are very prevailing; that the power of God is infinite, that he is just, and that sooner or later he punishes wicked princes and nations in this world.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. These verses agree with the 20th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings.

Ver. 9 to the end. This prayer of thanksgiving to Almighty God, which Hezekiah wrote after his recovery, affords a good example to those who, by divine mercy, are restored to health after a dangerous illness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter agrees with the latter part of the 20th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings.

We learn from this part of Hezekiah's history how apt even good men are to forget God in the day of prosperity. We also learn that worldly advantages are vain and uncertain, and that we never should be puffed up with the possession of them. It also appears from hence that God chastises those he loves, when they grow remiss and offend him, but that he is reconciled as soon as they repent and humble themselves.

CHAPTER XL.

Ver. 1, 2. These comfortable words related both to the return of the captive Jews from Babylon, and to the opening of the Messiah's kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel.

Ver. 3 to 9. Observe this prophecy which was fulfilled when the Baptist, as the forerunner of CHRIST, came to prepare the people for receiving him as the MESSIAH. See this prophecy applied to the Baptist by *St. Matthew, chap. iii. ver. 3*; by *St. Mark, chap. i. ver. 3*; by *St. Luke, chap. iii. ver. 4*; and by the Baptist to himself, *St. John, chap. i. ver. 23*.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe what the good tidings were that were to proceed from Jerusalem; they related to our blessed Saviour who, in his divine nature, is the LORD GOD. Observe, *ver. 11*, which agrees with our Saviour's own words,

when he called himself the good shepherd. *St. John, chap. x. ver. 14.*

Ver. 12 to 18. Observe, in what exalted terms the Prophet here speaks of the majesty of GOD. From such passages as these we should form our idea of the divine majesty and attributes.

This chapter should be read and studied with particular attention by Christians, for it teaches us that GOD abhors idolatry, and that he ought not to be represented by any Image, since it is impossible to make a likeness of him; that we ought to adore and fear this great and wonderful Being, before whom all creatures are as nothing, and that all our happiness depends upon GOD's favour and our trust in him.

CHAPTER XLI.

Ver. 1 to 10. The Isles, to whom the Prophet addressed this prophecy, meant the distant nations, who were exhorted to own the power of God and the vanity of idols. Observe, that Abraham is here called the *friend of God*, for whose sake his seed were blessed.

Ver. 10 to the end. GOD in these verses assured the Israelites of his divine protection, promising to make them triumph over their enemies, and to shower down his favours upon them. God also shows that he only is the true God, and that the idols were false gods because they could not foretell things to come. By the deliverer said, in *ver. 2*, to come from the east, and *ver. 25*, from the north, was meant Cyrus the Prince of Persia, whose father being a Persian came from the east, and his mother who was a Mede from the north of Judea. But the whole of this chapter has a reference to CHRIST, the great deliverer of mankind, of whom Cyrus, as the deliverer of the Jews from their captivity, was only a type. We should particularly remark the faithfulness of GOD's covenant with the seed of Abraham, as it is an assurance to Christians that GOD will never forsake his church, but that its enemies instead of compassing its ruin will be themselves destroyed.

CHAPTER XLII.

Ver. 1 to 10. These verses represent the character of the Messiah, his great meekness and humility, and the glory of his works, and are referred to by *St. Mat. chap. xii ver. 16.*

Ver. 10 to 13. These verses allude to the time when all nations of the earth will be of one religion, and may all join in one song of praise to GOD the universal LORD.

Ver. 13 to 17. These verses relate both to the coming of Cyrus to deliver the Jews, and to the coming of the MESSIAH.

Ver. 17. This verse foretold that idolaters should be confounded, and idolatry destroyed.

Ver. 18 to the end. The *deaf and blind*, here meant, were those who were spiritually blind and deaf, who did not perceive the truths of revealed religion.

Christians should take warning by these threatenings not to harden their hearts, or turn a deaf ear to his voice, but to walk in his ways, and keep his commandments.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Ver. 1 to 8. By Jacob, whom the Lord here promises to bring back, we are to understand the remnant of the house of Israel who were to go into captivity. By the LORD's sons and daughters, *ver. 6*, were meant such of the house of Israel as were faithful to their covenant, true members of the church.

Ver. 8 to 14. God here declares himself to be the only true God, who created all things, who made himself known to the Jews, and whose power no creature can resist.

Ver. 14 to 18. Observe, in these verses, for whose sake Babylon was to be destroyed; and this prophecy was delivered before the death of king Hezekiah, which happened more than a hundred years before the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and an hundred and sixty years before the taking of Babylon by Cyrus.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe here, that God complains of the blindness of the Jews, and declares that, because of their sins, they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies.

The promises in the first part of this chapter are applicable

to all the faithful servants of God, and are very proper to fill them with joy. The latter part affords powerful motives to fear the LORD, and to pay him the worship of the heart.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe here, God's gracious promises of salvation, the help of the Holy Spirit, and the divine blessing. Observe also, the supreme power and foreknowledge of the one true God.

Ver. 9 to 21. Observe, in these verses, the great folly of making idols and worshipping them.

Ver. 21 to the end. Observe here, how the Lord encouraged the Jews to forsake idols, by giving them hopes that he would bring them out of captivity and settle them again in their own land by means of Cyrus, king of Persia; and by turning the river Euphrates from its channel. Observe, that the folly of idol worship is here described in such strong colours that none but those who were in spiritual blindness could fail of perceiving it in the Prophet's representation; but the Jews had drawn this judgment upon themselves, and they could not, without the help of the Holy Spirit, see their error: but this help was offered to them every time the Prophet was sent to point out their crimes and call them to repentance.

Cyrus who was here prophesied of by name, nearly two hundred years before he was born, was a very extraordinary person, and greatly renowned for his wisdom, valour, and virtue; and the LORD ordained him to be the instrument of his good providence to the house of Jacob. This chapter should lead us to reflect upon the foreknowledge and the goodness of God.

CHAPTER XLV.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, that Cyrus is again mentioned by name as a person anointed, or expressly ordained, to be the instrument of the Lord in executing his will upon Babylon. It is said *the gates of brass should be opened before Cyrus*, and that he would find immense treasures in the city. This prediction was fulfilled when Belshazzar king of Babylon was terrified by the hand writing on the wall.

Those

Those who had the care of the gates next the river left them open in the night; and Cyrus took the city; the gates of the palace were then opened to inquire into the cause of the tumult; and Cyrus is said in history, to have found great treasures in Babylon.

Ver. 5 to 15. This passage in which the LORD declares himself to be the one Supreme GOD, the CREATOR, appears as if it was addressed to Cyrus himself, to convince him that there is but one GOD. The Persians worshipped the sun.

Ver. 15 to the end. These verses relate to the deliverance by Cyrus, but more particularly to the deliverance by CHRIST. What was foretold of Cyrus in this and the 44th chapter, was exactly fulfilled; see *Daniel, chap. v*; also *Ezra, chap. i*.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Bel and Nebo were the principal idols of the Babylonians. The Prophet here foretold their overthrow, and showed that the LORD is the protector of the Jews, and is the only true God. By the *ravenous bird from the east, ver. 11*, was meant the Persian army; by the man that was to execute what the LORD in his wisdom had determined against Babylon, was meant Cyrus, who was to command the Persian armies and to subdue the Babylonians, and set the Jews at liberty. It is remarkable that Cyrus, when he came against Babylon, had an eagle, which is a ravenous bird of prey, for his ensign: all that GOD threatened came exactly to pass.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Ver. 1 to 10. *Virgin daughter of Babylon, ver. 1*, was the city of Babylon.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, for what crimes such severe judgments were threatened to the Babylonians.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe here, that God reproves the people for their obstinacy, and for not paying regard to the prophecies by which he had warned them of what he would bring to pass, if they went on in the practice of idolatry.

Ver.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe here, how the Lord, by his Prophet, exhorts the people to obedience. Take notice in particular, of *ver. 18, 19*, also *ver. 22*, which should make every one afraid of being wicked. Observe that these prophecies, in which the Lord so long beforehand revealed his designs respecting the Jews and the Babylonians, afford the strongest evidence of the existence of a God, who by his providence governs all things. We should therefore pay particular regard to this proof.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Ver. 1 to 13. These verses relate to the coming of the MESSIAH to bring salvation not only to the Jews but to all nations. The ill success of his ministry among the Jews is foretold, and the great success of the Gospel among the Gentiles.

Ver. 13 to the end. The tender mercies of God to his faithful people, with the prosperity of the church in general, are described in these verses. Take particular notice of *ver. 15, 16*. The promises in this chapter have been partly fulfilled by the success of the Gospel, but they will have a fuller completion at the second coming of Christ. Those who have the happiness to be members of the church of Christ, should be sensible of their great privileges, and thankful for them, and should esteem it their greatest glory to contribute towards the prosperity of it.

CHAPTER L.

Ver. 1 to 4. The Prophet here makes use of the comparison of a woman who had been divorced from her husband, to show the Jews that if they as his people had been rejected, it was because they had forsaken their covenant with him.

Ver. 4 to the end. Observe, in these verses, a prophetic representation of the patient sufferings of our blessed Saviour. It agrees so exactly with the circumstance of our LORD while he stood silent before Pilate, and answered not a word, that they seem to speak for him.

CHAPTER LI.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe here, how the faithful Jews were exhorted, like true children of Abraham, to trust in God and obey him.

Ver. 4 to 9. Observe, that in these verses the Gentiles were encouraged to expect a share in the same salvation with the Jews, and that it was to be of everlasting duration.

Ver. 9 to 17. These verses signified that the same LORD who had dried up the Red Sea for his people to pass over, would certainly bring them out of captivity, and give to those who were faithful everlasting salvation.

Ver. 17 to 21. We have here a lively description of the miseries which the Jews were to suffer at the taking of Jerusalem. Observe, that the city is here represented under the figure of a person, lying in the streets, in a state of intoxication.

Ver. 21. The LORD is here represented as taking pity upon Jerusalem, and punishing her enemies.

CHAPTER LII.

Ver. 1 to 6. Jerusalem is here called upon to awake from her strong delusion, and to receive freedom as a gift from the LORD.

Ver. 7 to 12. The messenger of good tidings, in relation to the captive Jews, was Cyrus; but these verses relate further to another messenger of good tidings, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and speak of the purity which would be required in those who should be redeemed by him.

Ver. 13 to the end. These verses evidently relate to the person, character, office, and humiliation of the Messiah.

CHAPTER LIII.

This is a very remarkable chapter, for it describes the humiliation and death of the Messiah in as lively colours as if it had been written after they had taken place.

Ver. 1 signified that the Jews would not believe in our Saviour as the Messiah when they were told he was come upon earth. *Ver. 2* describes the private life he would lead in a state of poverty. *Ver. 3*, the contempt he would

meet

meet with from the Jews, and the sorrows he would endure. *Ver. 4 to 7* shows that he would suffer an ignominious death not for his own sins, but for those of mankind. *Ver. 7* describes the meekness and silence with which he would submit to his sufferings. *Ver. 8* that no one would stand forth to plead his cause when he would be unjustly accused, but that he would be put to death. *Ver. 9* shows that he would be buried in the sepulchre of a rich man, but that he would be reckoned by the Jews as a malefactor. *Ver. 10* shows that the Messiah was to offer by the appointment of the Lord, his life as a sacrifice for sin; that he would rise from the dead; and should see the good effects of his offering himself up, and of his intercession for transgressors, in the salvation of many.

This prophecy having been so exactly fulfilled in every part of it by Christ, is sufficient to convince us that he was really the great Redeemer spoken of by all the Prophets; that his doctrine is true and divine; that his sufferings and death were the wonderful means by which God has been pleased to save men; and that being now exalted to glory, he is able to save all those who come unto God by him.

CHAPTER LIV.

This chapter appears to relate to that happy period of the church in which both Jews and Gentiles will be united, and which is described in the *21st chapter of the Book of Revelations, ver. 18, &c.* nearly in the same words as in the latter part of this chapter.

How joyful will it be to see the accomplishment of these glorious promises!

CHAPTER LV.

This chapter describes the fulness, freedom, excellence, and everlasting nature of the blessings of the Gospel, and foretells the enlargement of CHRIST's kingdom, calling upon all to seize the precious opportunity of sharing in those blessings, which however are not to be had without repentance and amendment of life.

Our Saviour alluded to this chapter in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, *John, chap. iv. ver. 17*, and in his invitation to the Jews in the Temple, *John 7, ver. 37*.

CHAPTER LVI.

Ver. 1 to 9. Observe, in these verses, how God exhorts his people to the practice of every duty, and particularly to that of keeping his sabbaths, and that he promises to bless whoever does so, and to reckon them among his people, whatever be their condition in other respects. This agrees with what St. Peter said when he went to Cornelius the Gentile centurion; *see Acts, chap. x. ver. 34.*

Ver. 9 to the end. Under the figures of beasts of prey, the Lord here calls upon the enemies of the Jews, the Chaldeans, or perhaps the Romans, to come up against the Jews for the sins of their rulers, teachers, and other prophane persons, whose guilt drew down judgments on the nation.

CHAPTER LVII.

Ver. 1, 2. These verses show that the death of good men is oftentimes a blessing to them, and that when they depart this life they enter into peace.

Ver. 3 to 13. By the sons of the forcerers and the seed of the adulterer, were meant those who forsook the worship of God, and practised the abominations of the heathens. Idolatry was called spiritual adultery in respect to the Jews, because they broke their covenant which they had made to keep to the Lord only all the days of their life; married people sometimes break the covenant they have made to continue true and faithful to each other. The Jews in Israel's time, and afterwards, continued to practise their idolatries under trees, and on high places, notwithstanding the frequent warnings they had received, and the threatenings which God had denounced against them; and they still sought to make alliances with idolatrous kings instead of seeking help from God alone; *see 2d Book of Kings, chap. xvi. ver. 10, &c.*

Ver. 13 to 20. These verses are very comfortable to all contrite and humble persons, and they were particularly so to the Jews, as they foretold forgiveness and restoration to the favour of God after they had been cast off for their iniquities. Observe, *ver. 20,* to what the wicked are compared, and consider what a dreadful thing it is to have always a troubled mind, and no peace.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Ver. 1 to 13. This chapter shows what sort of fasting is acceptable to GOD; and that the LORD hears, delivers, and blesses those who, in times of public fasting, call upon him with sincerity and humility, and truly turn to him.

Ver. 13, 14. Observe, what great blessings are here promised to those who keep the sabbath day holy. Those who prefer obeying the Lord's commandments to the amusements which many engage in upon the sabbath day, will find real substantial delight and pleasure far superior to any they could contrive for themselves. Observe, *ver. 14*, that temporal blessings only are here named by the Prophet, but in other parts of Scripture the Lord has promised eternal ones to those who serve him truly, which none can be said to do who break the fourth commandment.

CHAPTER LIX.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe, what a shocking picture the prophet here gives of the wickedness and corruption of the Jewish nation. When a nation arrives at such a pitch of wickedness as this, the judgments of GOD quickly follow. This was the case with the Jews, and all nations should take warning from it, lest iniquity make a separation betwixt them and GOD.

Ver. 16 to the end. These verses relate to the Redeemer who was to be sent for the salvation of all amongst mankind, who should turn from their transgressions and observe the covenant of the LORD.

CHAPTER LX.

The subject of this chapter is the great increase and flourishing state of the church of GOD by the conversion of the Gentiles, and the repentance of the Jews. This prophecy has been in part fulfilled by the success of the GOSPEL, but it will not be completed till the fulness of the nations shall come in, and altogether become the kingdom of GOD and of his CHRIST; *see the Book of Revelations, chap. xxi. and xxii.*

CHAPTER LXI.

Ver. 1 to 4. These verses describe the office and character of the Messiah, and confirm the promises made in the foregoing chapter. Our Saviour applied this prophecy to himself in the beginning of his ministry; *see Luke, chap. iv. ver. 16, &c.*

Ver. 4 to the end. These verses relate to the blessings of the Gospel in the last times.

CHAPTER LXII.

Ver. 1 to 10. In these verses GOD continues to promise that he will redeem his church, which though it might appear forsaken of him, should again be in a glorious state, and no more delivered into the hands of its enemies. Observe, *ver. 2*, that the church of GOD was to have a new name, which has been fulfilled by its being called the *church of CHRIST* instead of the *Jewish church*.

Ver. 10 to the end. These verses relate to the coming of the Redeemer, and were partly accomplished by our Saviour's triumphant entry into Jerusalem; *see Matthew, chap. xxi. ver. 5*, and will be completed at the second coming of our blessed LORD.

When we read these comfortable promises, and consider how far they have been already fulfilled, we should rejoice and be thankful that we are sharers in the blessings and privileges of the church of CHRIST, and should resolve to prepare ourselves for the second coming of our SAVIOUR, that we may partake of the still more glorious blessings which are in reserve for his faithful people.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses the Redeemer is described as coming to take vengeance upon the enemies of his church.

Ver. 7 to the end. These verses are expressive of such sentiments as the Jews ought to have felt when they found they had incurred the anger of God. Observe, how continually the LORD guided and directed his chosen people, the Jews, so that they could never plead ignorance of their duty in extenuation of their crimes; for their ignorance was itself a great

great sin, because it was wilful; and it is the same in respect to Christians, all may know their duty and the terms of salvation if they will; not indeed from the preaching of living prophets, but from the writings of those who were sent in former days, and from other parts of Scripture.

CHAPTER LXIV.

This chapter contains a penitential prayer calculated for the use of the church of God, that the people of Israel might not be at a loss for words to express their penitence and contrition when their hearts were turned from idols to serve the true and only God.

CHAPTER LXV.

Ver. 1 to 8. The first verse relates to the calling of the Gentiles and the casting off the Jews; and the abominable practices which are attributed to them show that they were totally given up to idolatry.

Ver. 8 to 11. Observe, that the Lord here promises to save a remnant of the Israelites, and not to cut them all off.

Ver. 11 to 15. Further judgments are here threatened to the Jews in the times of the Gospel.

Ver. 17 to the end. The future glorious state of the church of Christ is here described in the most magnificent terms that can be imagined. Compare this with *Revelations, chap. vii. ver. 17, and chap. xxi. ver. 4.*

CHAPTER LXVI.

Ver. 1 to 4. These verses teach us that no outward rites of worship, however magnificent, can please the most High, while the heart of the worshipper is corrupt and impure, but that God always accepts those that come to him with an *humble spirit, and tremble at his word.*

Ver. 4 to the end. These verses foretold that the increase of the church would be sudden and astonishing, which was partly fulfilled by the great success of the Gospel when it was first preached, both in respect to Jews and Gentiles; but it will receive a farther accomplishment when all the Jews and Gentiles shall be united under the religion of CHRIST. Then every enemy of the church will be finally destroyed,

destroyed, and the unbelieving and ungodly condemned to everlasting perdition, and the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.

The promises which GOD made, and the threatenings he denounced by the Prophet Isaiah, to his people Israel as a church and nation, and to the nations they were connected with, were all exactly fulfilled; which is an earnest to us that every prediction of this Prophet respecting the Christian church, will also have its accomplishment in GOD's appointed time.

Every Christian, therefore, should apply to himself the warnings, admonitions, and exhortations of this Evangelical Prophet as far as they concern the members of the church; and this, not merely for his own sake, but for the sake of the nation he belongs to, and for the glory of God.

JEREMIAH.

THE book of Jeremiah is partly historical, and partly prophetic. He prophesied for about thirty-four years, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, and for a short time afterwards.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe, *ver. 1, 2, 3,* that Jeremiah was a priest, and in whose reign he was called to be a prophet, and how long he continued to prophesy. Observe also, that Jeremiah was very diffident of himself, but the LORD assured him that he would qualify him for the prophetic office, make use of him as his prophet, in the great revolutions which he was going to bring to pass among the nations of the earth, by sending him to declare the purposes of his will respecting them.

Ver. 11 to 17. The vision of the almond rod signified the near approach of the divine judgments, and that of the seething pot, the severity of them. The evil threatened from

the north, *ver. 14, 15*, was the army of the Chaldeans. Observe, *ver. 16*, the great wickedness of the people of Judah, especially how they were given up to idolatry.

Ver. 17 to the end. Observe the promises which the LORD gave Jeremiah of assistance and protection.

CHAPTER II.

Observe, in this chapter, the love of God for the Israelitish nation; their ingratitude, and for what crimes they were threatened with destruction. It was indeed astonishing that they should forsake the Lord who had done such great things for them, and follow idols which could do them no good, and in seeking help from Egypt.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that it was *spiritual* adultery, that is, idol worship, with which the Prophet, in the name of the Lord, charged the kingdom of Judah. *Her lovers, ver. 4*, were the idolatrous nations with which the kingdom of Judah formed alliances, or whose idols were worshipped in Jerusalem. The *ten tribes* first forsook the Lord to serve idols, and the *people of Judah* imitated and even exceeded them by their crimes and obstinacy. What is said of *backsliding Israel, ver. 6*, alluded to their having sacrificed to idols on high places and in groves after having forsaken them.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe, how kindly God declared that notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of his people he was still ready to forgive them upon their repentance, and how graciously he promised that after he had dispersed his people he would gather them together again in the latter days as one church. Observe, in particular, *ver. 16, 17*, which foretel that the Jewish religion should be put an end to, and a new one established, and that the new religion should be a blessing to the other nations as well as to the Jews.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, that if the Jews would have been converted, God would have had compassion upon them.

Ver. 5 to 19. Read with attention the solemn declaration which the Prophet was inspired by the LORD to make to the people

people of Judah, in which he threatened them that if they continued in their rebellion they should be subdued by the Chaldeans. The *lion seeking his prey*, ver. 7, signified the king of Babylon and his armies. He is called *the destroyer of the Gentiles* because he had conquered many Gentile nations. The threatenings in this chapter were fulfilled some years afterwards, as God's threatenings always are, sooner or later, if they do not produce repentance.

Ver. 19 to the end. This is a lamentation of the Prophet for the dreadful calamities that were to fall upon Jerusalem.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter contains very important instructions. We here see what is likely to be the fate of a nation when it becomes extremely corrupt, which is certainly the case when the number of good men in it is very small; when impurity and injustice reign without opposition, when men have neither a grateful sense of the kindness of the LORD, nor dread his threatenings. In this state did the Jews arrive before GOD executed his judgments upon them; but he gave them warning long before that he would visit them with judgments if they would not repent: and he actually did so, which should make every nation afraid of offending in like manner; and it is in the power of every individual to increase the number of the righteous by his own conduct and his influence upon those of his own household at least, if it reaches no further. Observe, particularly, ver. 7, 8, 12, 22, 25, 29; and remember the LORD's words, ver. 9, and 29.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, ver. 1, that the Lord threatened by the Prophet to send evil against Judah *from the north*. The *daughter of Zion* meant Jerusalem. Observe, to what she was compared, ver. 2, and all the miseries that were to come upon her; also how unmindful the people of Judah were of the warnings that were given them. The *good old ways*, ver. 16, which they were admonished to *seek for* and *walk in*, were the ways of God's commandments.

Ver. 19 to 22. Observe, that the people of Judah were told that their offerings and sacrifices would rather hasten their

ruin, and make it more terrible, because of their hypocrisy in pretending to honour GOD when their hearts were far from him.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe, how dreadful the enemy is described to be who was to come against Jerusalem from the north country, meaning Nebuchadnezzar's army.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe, *ver. 2*, that this prophecy was spoken to the people when they were going into the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. It is a very solemn one, and all that the Lord threatened came to pass. It therefore should lead us to reflect that it is in vain for any to glory in being members of the church of GOD while they lead wicked lives; that those who think to please GOD by going to his house, and performing acts of worship, whilst they continue in unrighteousness, deceive themselves; and that the only means to obtain the favour of GOD is to reform our lives, and do what his laws require. The *queen of heaven*, *ver. 18*, signified the Moon, which was worshipped as an idol under that name. Observe, that the children of the people of Judah were trained up in idolatry. *Ver. 18* relates to the sacrificing of children to Moloch the idol of the Ammonites.

CHAPTER VIII.

In this chapter we have a further description of the calamities and desolation that would be brought upon Jerusalem and all Judah, and of the sins for which they would be sent. *Ver. 2* shows that they worshipped the Sun as well as the Moon and all the host of heaven, meaning all the imaginary gods of the heathens, which were supposed to inhabit the Stars.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe, in the beginning of this chapter, how earnestly the Prophet laments the approaching destruction of the Jews, and their great and crying sins; and in the latter part of it, how he calls upon the inhabitants of Judah to do the same. Observe also, how he continues to declare the judgments that would fall upon Judah. Give particular at-
tention

tention to *ver. 23, 24*, which convey a most useful and instructive lesson; for the greatest honour and glory of a nation, or an individual, is to know and practise the true religion.

CHAPTER X.

Observe here, how the Prophet exhorted the Jews not to imitate the folly and wickedness of those who worshipped the stars, and that served the idols they themselves had made; but to consider the glorious majesty and greatness of GOD, and the happiness of being in covenant with him; but nothing would keep them from idolatry, therefore heavy judgments were threatened. What is said of the majesty of GOD, *ver. 10, &c.* should inspire us with the highest sentiments of reverence and esteem towards him. From the three last verses we may learn that God chastises men because his chastisements are needful for them, not because he takes pleasure in their destruction, which should lead us to submit to his fatherly corrections.

CHAPTER XI.

Observe, in this chapter, that God sends his curse upon those who keep not his covenant, and that he cuts them off from his people. Let us remember then what the terms and conditions of the Christian covenant are, into which we have been taken, the vows we have made to keep it, and the privileges we shall forfeit if we depart from it. Observe also, *ver. 14*, that Jeremiah was forbidden to pray for the people of Judah at this time, which shows that when a nation is become so desperately wicked as to be devoted to destruction by the Almighty, even the prayers of the righteous will not be heard in its behalf. We should also consider the threatenings denounced against the people of Anathoth, which shows that it is a very great sin to refuse to hear the ministers of the LORD, or to treat them ill,

CHAPTER XII.

We should learn from this chapter to believe that the wicked and the hypocrite will not escape unpunished, and that they are never truly happy though God may spare them a while; and likewise that the servants of God ought

not to be discouraged though they be exposed to scoffing and insults as Jeremiah was.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. The sign which the Lord commanded the Prophet to make use of was intended to give force to his predictions. Hiding the girdle in the river Euphrates, signified that Chaldea, which was watered by that river, would be the place in which they would be for a time hidden and spoiled, so as not to be known for the Lord's people.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe here, the Prophet's earnest exhortation, and the great affection he testified for the people of Judah. Observe also, the awful message which the LORD sent by the Prophet to the king and queen of Judah. The words, *ver. 23, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, &c.* signify, that when men have established themselves in long habits of sin it is very difficult to reclaim them, and many are never reclaimed at all.

CHAPTER XIV.

From this chapter we learn that all temporal evil, such as drought, pestilence, famine, and the sword, are tokens of the wrath of GOD to bring nations to repentance. We ought also to learn from this chapter to hearken to those who declare the truth to us sincerely, and without flattery, and not in times of public calamity, in particular, to listen to those who would persuade us that we may go on in our sins and follies without danger or fear.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe the words at the beginning of this chapter which were very awful ones to the people of Judah, for they showed that the prayers of the most godly persons would not avail in their behalf, because the Lord had resolved on account of their obstinate wickedness to send his severe judgments upon them. It grieved Jeremiah to be the messenger of such evil tidings, but when false prophets were lulling the people of Judah into security it was his duty to warn them of their danger.

Observe,

Observe, *ver. 10*, that the setting up of an idol in the house of the Lord had brought a pollution upon it which could never be done away. The Temple was dedicated by Solomon to the Lord, and the Lord had showed forth his glory in it. Manasseh made it an idol temple; *see 2 Kings, chap. xxi. at the latter end*, what the Lord threatened at that time.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe, that God forbid Jeremiah to marry, to enter into houses of mourning, or to go to any feast, that by this behaviour of the Prophet he might affect the Jews the more, and make them understand that the time of their desolation drew near, and that the children that were just coming into the world should be exposed to all kinds of miseries. This shows us that in times of public calamity we should abstain from many things that might be lawful at another time. *Ver. 14, 15.* The restoration of the Jews is foretold.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, that the great sin of Judah was idolatry. The *altars and groves*, alluded to *ver. 2*, were those devoted to idols. In *ver. 4* the captivity of Judah is again foretold.

Ver. 5 to 9. Observe here, that it is in vain to confide in the help of man, without the blessing of the LORD; that there is no condition so happy and secure as that of those who trust in God and fear him.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe here, that we should distrust ourselves and search our own hearts instead of thinking ourselves righteous.

Ver. 12 to 19. These verses contain a prayer of the Prophet's for himself.

Ver. 19 to the end. Take particular notice of the LORD's message concerning the observance of the SABBATH, for it is as much the duty of Christians to keep it holy as it was that of the people of Israel; and nothing is so likely to bring ruin upon a nation as prophaning the LORD'S DAY, for this sin leads to all kinds of wickedness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe, that under the comparison of a potter and his clay, the Lord represents his own absolute power over the nations of the earth to raise them, or to destroy them, and also plainly declares how he deals with nations in general; this is the meaning of the passage, and yet some have inferred from it that God has created some individuals on purpose to destroy them, or render them unhappy; but no such doctrine is taught by this prophecy, nor in any other part of Scripture. God had chosen Israel for his peculiar people, and had made of them a great nation, all which he had fulfilled, but God certainly had the power to cast down that nation as well as those of the heathens, which he frequently threatened to do, and at length effected; however, the Lord promised to preserve a remnant which also he affected.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that instead of repenting at the preaching of the Prophet, the people of Judah resolved to persecute him. The threatenings at the end of the chapter are not to be considered as the private wishes of the Prophet, for he was far from wishing any ill to the people, as appears from many parts of his prophecies, but he had been forbidden to pray for them, and he only spoke as a prophet by the inspiration of God. His words show that the destruction of the kingdom of Judah was determined, and that evils of every kind were to fall upon the people of that devoted nation and their children.

CHAPTER XIX.

Observe in this as well as in the foregoing chapters, in what plain words the people were warned of the judgments that were now near at hand, yet they would not repent. The type of the potter's vessel shows how easily the Lord can destroy the greatest nation. Observe, *ver. 9*, what dreadful miseries were to happen during the siege of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe, that Jeremiah was again inspired to foretel the destruction of Jerusalem; also, the fall of the priest

priest who used him ill for doing his duty. The prediction concerning the city was exactly fulfilled, as without doubt that relating to Pashur was also.

Ver. 7 to the end. Observe in these verses, that the continual opposition Jeremiah met with, and his grief at finding that all his prophecies and warnings lost their effect, for a time overpowered him. This affords one instance of the truth of the Apostle's words that the prophets were men of like passions with ourselves; *see James, chap. xv. ver. 17.* Even Job, the most patient of men, uttered the like wishes and complaints as Jeremiah; but these good men had not had the benefit of our Saviour's example; who, with the prospect of greater sufferings before him than any man ever endured, said no more than, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me*, immediately adding, *nevertheless not my will but thine be done.* Christians should therefore take their blessed Lord for a pattern, and not in times of affliction curse the hour of their birth, and wish they had never been born, because a prophet, in the hour of weakness and infirmity did so; at the same time should he be overcome as the Prophet was he may hope for pity and forgiveness on account of the infirmity of human nature.

CHAPTER XXI.

Observe, that what is related in this chapter happened when the Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah. Also, that though the Lord had determined the destruction of Jerusalem it was still in the power of every individual to save his life by submitting to the conqueror he had set over them.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 10. This prophecy was delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, twenty years before that in the former chapter. Its being placed here serves to call to mind how kindly the Lord had dealt with this rebellious people.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, that the Prophet here foretold what would befall the posterity of Josiah, king of Judah; that Shallum, otherwise named Jehoiahaz, should be carried away into Egypt and die there; that Jehoiakim his brother
and

and successor should be deprived of burial; and that Coniah, otherwise called Jeconiah, should be carried to Babylon by the Chaldeans, where he should die and have no son to reign after him. All these predictions came exactly to pass; *see 2d Book of Kings, chap. xxiii. ver. 34, 35. 2d Book of Chronicles, chap. xxxvi. ver. 6. Jeremiah, chap. xxxvi. ver. 36. 2d Book of Kings, chap. xxiv. ver. 6.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

This prophecy was delivered in the reign of the same king as the former one.

Ver. 1 to 5. The pastors and shepherds against whom woe was denounced, were the prophets and priests, who were not only careless of their flocks, but led them astray also by their abominable practices.

Ver. 5 to 9. Observe, that these verses contain a very remarkable prophecy respecting our blessed Saviour, who was to be the great shepherd and ruler of his church, and the restorer of righteousness to fallen man.

Ver. 9 to the end. The *burden of the Lord* seems to have been an expression then in use, to signify any prophecy which a real prophet was inspired to deliver to the people. Those, to which the false prophets gave this name, were of their own invention, and directly contrary to the word of the Lord. It is certainly of great consequence that the pastors of the church should discharge their duty, and speak the truth, and none should be listened to who speak contrary to the words of the real prophets, which are now to be found in the Scriptures alone. In the present day we have preachers like those in Jeremiah's days, crying out in the fields and streets *the burden of the Lord*, or words of similar import, pretending to immediate inspiration from heaven. These are false prophets, and should not be followed, for they are deceivers of the people, and sometimes of themselves also. Observe, in particular, *ver. 25, 26.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

This prophecy was delivered in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. Observe the care which God promised to take of the Jews already gone into captivity with Jeremiah, and of those that remained still with Zedekiah in their own country.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, that the predictions in this chapter agree with Isaiah's prophecies, excepting that the latter Prophet did not name the time the Babylonish captivity would last. The seventy years began to be reckoned from the reign of Jehoiachim, when a great number of the Jews were carried to Babylon, with a part of the sacred vessels of the Temple, and they ended at the time when the Jews returned into their own country with the permission of Cyrus, king of Persia.

Ver. 15 to the end. The Lord's command to the Prophet to cause all the nations here mentioned, *to drink of the cup of his fury*, signified that all those nations should in their turns feel the effects of the anger of the LORD which they justly provoked, and it happened as the LORD threatened; one wicked nation after another was made an instrument of his vengeance to other wicked nations, and none escaped the effects of his just indignation.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Observe, that this prophecy was delivered by Jeremiah as the word of the LORD in the presence of the priests and the prophets, as well as in the ears of the people; that the princes and the people were awed by the prophecy, but the people would have put him to death had not the LORD raised him up a protector in Ahikam. Thus God always defends his faithful servants when he sees fit to preserve them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The kings, named in this chapter, are supposed to have sent their own ambassadors to solicit Zedekiah, who was king of Judah at that time, to join with them in a confederacy against the king of Babylon. Jeremiah was commanded to put bonds and yokes upon his neck, and to send them afterwards by the ambassadors to their respective kings, to intimate to them that GOD, *the LORD of the whole earth*, had decreed their subjection to the king of Babylon, and that it was their wisdom to submit. Observe, that Zedekiah in particular, was not to join in the revolt, and was warned against trusting
to

to false prophets. The predictions in the latter part of the chapter, respecting the vessels of the Temple, were exactly fulfilled; *see Ezra, chap. i. ver. 7.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Observe in this chapter, that there was a false prophet who predicted the very contrary to what Jeremiah prophesied, but he soon came to an untimely end, which ought to have been a warning to the Jews not to hearken to any others who opposed the prophet of the Lord; and it should serve as an example to strike terror into all who seduce others into sin.

CHAPTER XXIX.

This chapter contains the substance of a prophetic letter sent by Jeremiah to the captive Jews in Babylon, intended to reconcile them to their captivity, to inform them how long it would continue, and advise them to make the best of their condition, which was far better than that of their brethren, whom they had left behind in Jerusalem. It appears, from the latter part of the chapter, that a false prophet of the name of Shemaiah, had written a letter to the Jews in Babylon against Jeremiah, who was inspired to denounce heavy woes against him for deceiving the captives.

CHAPTER XXX.

Observe, in this chapter, the gracious promises of the Lord to the people of Judah in the midst of the judgments which he sent upon them for their sins. Some of the promises were accomplished when the people were delivered from captivity; others when our Saviour Christ came upon earth to bring salvation; but others remain to be fulfilled at his second coming.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1 to 27. Observe, in these verses, that God promised by his Prophet to settle them in a happy and glorious condition after he had chastened and corrected them, and that Ephraim, meaning the Israelites of the ten tribes, should share in this happy revolution.

Ver.

Ver. 27 to the end. Observe here, that God promises to make a new covenant with the house of Israel which should last as long as heaven and earth remain. St. Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 8*, applies this prophecy to the covenant of the Gospel, and it was brought in by our Lord Jesus Christ, but will not be fully enjoyed till our Saviour's second coming.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 6. The prophecy which gave such offence to Zedekiah, and occasioned his putting Jeremiah into prison, is in the *34th chapter*.

Ver. 6 to the end. Observe, that the Prophet was directed to buy a field; his doing so at such a time showed that he verily believed that the Jews would be restored to their own land. His prayer is a further testimony of his faith; observe, that it also expresses his grief for the calamities of his country. Observe, how the Prophet speaks of the LORD, *ver. 17, 18, 19, 27*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, in this chapter, that God promises again such a restoration to Israel and Judah as shall astonish all the world, and describes the future prosperity of Jerusalem. These predictions have been fulfilled.

Ver. 15 to the end. These promises relate to the kingdom of the Messiah, and will not be fully accomplished till the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1 to 8. The prophecy in these verses was delivered before that in the last chapter. Observe, *ver. 3*, that the king's eyes were to behold those of the king of Babylon; also, *ver. 5*, that a peaceful death and an honourable burying was foretold to Zedekiah.

Ver. 8 to the end. Observe, how the Prophet reproves the Jews for their conduct towards their brethren of the poorer sort, whom they released from bondage by a solemn covenant in time of great danger, and compelled to return to it afterwards;

wards ; and the threatenings of the Lord for this treacherous conduct, *ver. 17 to the end*, all which was shortly fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Jonadab, the son of Rechab, lived in the reign of Jehu, king of Israel ; *see 2d Book of Kings, chap. x. ver. 15*. The vow their father had exacted they religiously observed. From their example Jeremiah took occasion to reprove the Jews because they showed less regard to the laws of GOD than the Rechabites to the command of their father.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The behaviour of Jehoiakim, as related in this chapter, is a proof of the greatest impiety and of the utmost contempt of GOD and his holy word ; but it is in vain for the wicked to strive against GOD, what he determines is always executed, and sooner or later, impious and prophane men will bear the punishment due to them ; so it happened to Jehoiakim who was carried captive into Babylon.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe, that Zedekiah sent and entreated the Prophet to pray for him ; yet his heart was not reformed, therefore the LORD repeated his threatenings.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe, that though Jeremiah was unjustly accused by the Jews, and was even beaten and thrown into a dungeon, yet he did not forbear telling the king that he should be subdued by the Chaldeans. This showed that he feared GOD rather than man, and the LORD softened the heart of Zedekiah towards him. Thus Providence sets bounds to the malice of the wicked, delivers the righteous, and makes good men meet with comfort and help even in the worst times.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 14. The servants of GOD are often slandered and persecuted for doing their duty, but GOD takes care of them, and raises up friends to them when they least expect it. Ebed-melech was a pious man, who had the courage to stand

stand up in defence of oppressed innocence ; and he soon was rewarded for doing so.

Ver. 14 to the end. From the discourse of Jeremiah in these verses, it appears that the destruction of Zedekiah and of Jerusalem was not so determined but it might have been prevented by timely repentance. Observe, that the divine threatenings and predictions, and the knowledge God has of futurity, do not deprive men of their free will ; and that the evils they bring upon themselves are the just punishments of their crimes. Zedekiah suffered a false shame and the fear of men to get the better of his conscience. Observe, that the warnings contained in this chapter were the last God gave Zedekiah ; and as he neglected to improve them it was afterwards too late to do it, and he drew upon himself and his subjects the utmost misery.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter agrees with the *25th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, and the 36th chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles*. We here see a fulfilment of all that the prophets had foretold respecting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.

Observe, that the predictions of Jeremiah, *chap. xxxii. ver. 4*, that Zedekiah's eyes should *see the king of Babylon*, and that of Ezekiel, *chap. xii. ver. 13*, that he should *not see Babylon though he should die there*, were both accomplished. What befel this unfortunate prince, who had received so many warnings from God, shows that they who refuse to hear the voice of God, they who have led others into sin, and are the authors of public miseries, and particularly perjured persons, are at length made examples of the just vengeance of God. The preservation of Jeremiah, and of Ebed-melech the friend who had saved his life, are remarkable instances of the protection which God vouchsafes to give good men in time of public calamity.

CHAPTER XL.

This chapter, and the four following ones, contain the history of what happened to the Jews whom the king of Babylon left in Judea after the taking of Jerusalem.

Ver. 1 to 7. Jeremiah's piety and love for his country
made

made him choose to stay there, for he preferred his duty and the edification of his brethren to all worldly advantages.

Ver. 7 to 13. Observe that the Jews might have lived securely in their own country under Gedaliah, if they would have submitted to the Chaldeans, and that even then God sent them a plentiful harvest, which shows that God is ready to do good to those who submit to the dispensations of his providence.

Ver. 13 to the end. Though it is not right to give ear to tale bearers, prudence requires in such times as those Gedaliah lived in, that such reports as concern the life of a person should be enquired into, and those who turn a deaf ear to such as would warn them of their danger often suffer for it, as was the case of Gedaliah, who might have guarded himself against Ishmael without consenting to his being put to death.

CHAPTER XLI.

What is related in this chapter shows that it was very impolitic in Gedaliah to admit Ishmael and the princes in the manner he did after being cautioned against them; however God did not suffer Ishmael to enjoy the fruits of his crimes, but set bounds to his wickedness by means of Johanan.

CHAPTER XLII.

Observe, that the LORD, who knows all hearts, knew that Johanan and the rest were hypocrites and dissemblers, and that they were obstinately bent upon going into Egypt, at the very time they took a solemn oath to obey his commands, which shows that they were very wicked. They might yet have been a happy remnant, if they would have believed the prophets of the LORD and obeyed the divine commandments.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Observe, that in the behaviour of the Jews as related in this chapter, we have an instance of great impiety joined with hypocrisy. It is no uncommon thing in the world for people, who upon some occasions express their zeal and good intentions, to forget their promises, and reject the most wholesome counsels. Observe also, that God suffered Jere-

miah

miah to be carried down into Egypt, that he might there denounce the ruin of the Egyptians as well as of the Jews who had put their trust in them. Observe, that wherever the wicked are, the hand of GOD finds them out, and that those who think to avoid, by disobeying him, the evils they dread, and to that end make use of unlawful means, fall by those very means into the evils they meant to shun.

CHAPTER XLIV.

We see from this chapter that the Jews in Egypt were not reformed nor humbled by the desolation of their country, and that they proceeded to such excess of rage and impiety as to tell the Prophet they had met with nothing but misfortunes since they left off worshipping the moon, which they called the queen of heaven. This shows that when men have once forsaken GOD they grow continually worse and worse, and so hardened that adversity itself has no effect upon them, and then GOD forsakes them entirely. Thus it happened to those unhappy Jews who retired into Egypt, they were destroyed with the Egyptians by war and famine as Jeremiah had foretold. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the king of Egypt, and the Jews, who thought to find a place of refuge in that king's dominions, perished there in a miserable manner.

CHAPTER XLV.

This chapter appears to be connected with the subject treated of *chap. 36*. Baruch seems to have been greatly alarmed at the threatenings in those prophecies which Jeremiah had employed him to write, and was perhaps fearful of sharing in the persecution carried on against that Prophet. To abate or relieve his fears this prophecy was sent.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Ver. 1 to 27. The predictions contained in this chapter were exactly fulfilled after the destruction of Jerusalem. A great number of Jews perished in this war, but the Prophet foretold that Egypt would be again inhabited.

Ver. 27 to the end. These verses were designed to comfort the faithful people of GOD among the Jews, and from them, and other like passages, we learn that GOD, amidst all the

CHAPTER LII.

In this chapter, which agrees with the latter part of the 24th chapter, and the whole of the 25th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, observe, that in the 28th, 29th, and 30th verses, we have an account of the number of captives Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon at different times, which was but a very small remnant of the kingdom of Israel, that had been like the *sand of the sea and the stars of heaven for multitude.*

Let us now call to mind how exactly many of the predictions of Jeremiah were fulfilled. When this Prophet at first declared to the different kings, in whose reigns he prophesied, and to the people of Judah, that the king of Babylon would certainly come against Jerusalem and take it, they would not believe him; and when the king of Babylon's army laid siege to the city, they could not be persuaded that he would be able to destroy it, but went on in their idolatries and wickedness in spite of all the admonitions of the Prophet. At length we find the city was actually taken and burnt, together with the Temple; every thing happened just as Jeremiah had foretold, yet even after this, the few people that were left in the land by the conquerors continued to rebel against God, and to practise idolatries. We may therefore clearly see the justice of God's dealings with his rebellious people, and their history should serve as an awful warning to all people who are taken into covenant with God to continue faithful to him, to worship him, and serve him truly all the days of their lives, that his blessing may remain with them continually, and that the nation they belong to may be a righteous nation, in favour with the Lord, and not be cast down for the wickedness of its inhabitants. Remember that the nation you belong to is in covenant with God as a Christian nation, and that every individual contributes towards the righteousness or wickedness of it; and let the fate of the Jewish nation warn you to attend to the Prophet Jeremiah before it be too late, for *though he is dead he still speaks to us*, in this book, which shows the way in which God deals with his people, and furnishes many good precepts for the regulation of their lives in the way of righteousness.

LAMENTATIONS.

LAMENTATIONS.

THIS Book contains the prophetic lamentations and complaints of the Prophet Jeremiah for the desolation of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews, written after the death of king Josiah.

CHAPTER I.

As Jeremiah lamented this desolation, so all those who love God are most sensibly afflicted when they see men provoke his divine majesty by their sins, and his church exposed to sufferings. And as the Prophet owns that all the calamities which beset the Jews, were the just punishment of their sins, we ought likewise to adore the righteousness of God in all the evils that happen to us, and receive them as chastisements which we have brought upon ourselves. In imitation of Jeremiah we must zealously implore God's mercy when he is provoked against us, and above all pray fervently for the peace and deliverance of the church.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter the Prophet gives a lively representation of the miseries which attended the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. He saw in prophetic vision all the dreadful circumstances particularly mentioned. *Ver. 9*, the elders or principals sitting in the dust; the virgins so lately walking about in gay and splendid attire, clothed in sackcloth. *Ver. 10*, little children swooning in the streets, others crying in vain for food, and dying on their mothers' bosoms. *Ver. 11*. The enemies of Judea rejoicing at its destruction, and insulting those whom they had vanquished; the young and old lying dead in the streets; how dreadful was all this! Observe also, that the Prophet speaks of all these miseries as inflicted by the LORD, and says it was God *himself* who cast off his people, and delivered his temple, his altars, and his city, into the hands of the idolaters; and it certainly was so when it happened, for the enemies of the Jews could not have hurt these

once sacred places, if GOD had not withdrawn his protection from them; but they had provoked him by their abominable practices, and were utterly unworthy to be called his people; yet GOD did not wholly forsake them, in the midst of judgment he remembered mercy, and only chastised them like a kind and tender father, to bring them back to a sense of their duty, that they might, by amendment of life, regain his favour, and be finally put in possession of the blessings he had in store for them.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter is very proper for the instruction and comfort of persons in afflictions. Observe, that the Prophet teaches us that though GOD, for the punishment of their sins, exposes men to various evils and distresses, he does not willingly afflict them, but does it with justice and even with mercy; and that when he chastises them he does not cast them off, but only intends to bring them back to himself; that afflictions are very useful and necessary for us, as it is by sufferings we learn to seek GOD, who then draws nigh to us; and the Prophet assures us, that God is appeased towards those who humble themselves under his affliction, and improve under his rod. This doctrine should be well understood; and remembered to be used at all times, but particularly in times of affliction. Read from *ver. 22 to 42* with great attention.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter Jeremiah foretels the terrible judgments of God which would fall upon the Jews when Jerusalem was taken; and compares the happy state they were in before their ruin with their deplorable condition afterwards.

All the miseries which are described in this chapter, as having befallen the Jews, were threatened by the Lord before the death of Moses; *see Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii. ver. 49 to the end*, and they had repeated warnings from the Prophets afterwards, so that they may truly be said to have brought every thing upon themselves.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that this chapter contains a prayer in which the Prophet entreats the LORD to have compassion upon Jerusalem and the Jews. He represents the greatness of their desolation, confesses that they were justly punished for the sins of their fathers, and earnestly begs of God to restore Jerusalem and his people to their former state. We must not conclude from *ver. 7*, that God, who is just and good, punishes children, so as to exclude them from his mercy, for the sins which their fathers committed: but it often happens that God, to chastise the fathers, and for the good of the children themselves, exposes them in this life to the calamities which their fathers by their sins have brought upon them. This the captive Jews at Babylon experienced, and this God threatened them with in the law, saying, *he would punish the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation*, which we daily see happen in the course of his providence.

The good prophet Jeremiah is said to have been put to death at Zephthah in Egypt.

EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL prophesied in Chaldea, where he was with the Jews, who had been carried thither with king Jehoiachin, about eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied from the fifth year of his captivity, for the space of about twenty years, while Jeremiah at Jerusalem was foretelling the same things.

CHAPTER I.

We have in this chapter an account of the calling of Ezekiel to the prophetic office, and of a wonderful vision he saw, in which he had representation of the glory of God. Observe, *ver. 3*, that Ezekiel was a priest.

Ver. 4 to 26. This was a vision of the cherubims, of whom we can form no idea but such as the words of the prophecy itself conveys.

Ver. 26 to the end. The description of the wonderful Being who was upon the throne, agrees with the visions of Isaiah and other prophets, and with those of St. John in the Book of Revelations, from comparing of which we may learn that this glorious Being was the LORD, the SON OF GOD, who took our nature upon him, and now sits at the right hand of GOD the Father in the glory which he had with the Father before the world began; *see Revelations, chap. i. ver. 14.*

CHAPTER II.

Observe in this chapter, the commission which the Prophet received from the Lord to go to the Jews. The spirit which entered into him was the HOLY SPIRIT, by which he was inspired to foretel things to come.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 15. The LORD's command to Ezekiel to eat the roll of the book, signified that he was to hearken to the word of the LORD, and write it in his own heart, as well as deliver it to the Jews of the captivity, though it related to those who were still in Judea.

Ver. 15 to 22. Observe, that Ezekiel was told that if he did not do his duty as a Prophet he would be answerable for the sins of the people, as well as each individual of them for his own particular sins; but that if he did warn them, and they would not repent, they alone should be answerable for their own sins. But we must be careful not to infer from this, that the salvation of the people depends upon the righteousness of the minister to whose particular flock they belong. The case of the Prophets was peculiar, they were ministers at large; their commission extended widely, very widely, to all who should read their prophecies, to the whole church; and accordingly Ezekiel, in his writings, made known to the whole church what he was commissioned by the LORD to reveal; therefore he is clear from the imputation of neglect: he has nothing to answer for on this head, and those mem-
bers

bers of the church who do not take warning from his prophecies to repent of their evil ways, or to continue in the ways of righteousness, will have to answer for their own crimes.

Ver. 22 to the end. Observe here, that the Prophet had another vision of the glory of God, and repeated promises of divine inspiration.

CHAPTER IV.

The LORD frequently represented by visions, and sensible images, what he thought fit to reveal to the Prophets; and they likewise used to represent by the same images and extraordinary actions what was to come to pass, in order to make the deeper impression upon the minds of the people. The 390 days in which Ezekiel was to lie on his left side, (probably for a part of each day) denoted the number of years God bore with the idolatries of the ten tribes from the time of Jeroboam's setting up the golden calves in Dan and Bethel, till the last gleaning of them were carried into captivity with Zedekiah; and the *forty days* in which he was to lie upon his right side, denoted the number of years God bore with the excessive sins of Judah, from the solemn league of Josiah, to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also the duration of the siege which was to last a day for every year. The mean and uncommon food of the Prophet signified the great famine which would be in Jerusalem during the siege.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe, in these verses, that the Prophet shows by another type the judgment the Lord was about to execute upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem by famine, sword, and dispersion. The *razor*, or *knife*, signified the wrath of God. The *balance* was an emblem of divine justice. The *hairs* signified the Jews; the dividing of the hair the fate and punishment of individuals; the few bound up, denoted the small number that should be left in the land. *Ver. 4* seems to allude particularly to the fate of those few after the murder of Gedaliah. These awful predictions had their full accomplishment, as we read in the Book of Jeremiah.

Ver. 5 to the end. When the Prophet spake these words, he probably

probably pointed to the picture of Jerusalem, which he had been commanded to draw upon the tile. The predictions he delivered agreed exactly with those of Jeremiah, though they were far distant from each other. Ezekiel's served to inform the captives of what was about to happen to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter foretold that the cities and places where the Jews had practised their idolatries should be destroyed, which came exactly to pass.

Observe, in this chapter, that instead of offering sacrifices upon the holy altar at the Temple at Jerusalem only, the people of Israel had altars like the Gentiles on every high hill, and under green trees, and copied the heathens in all their abominations.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter foretels the final destruction of the land of Israel and Judah, on account of their heinous sins, and the great distress of the remnant that should escape. The *beauty of his ornament*, ver. 20, signified the holy Temple. The *chain*, ver. 23, was a type of that captivity in which both king and people should be led in bonds to Babylon.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 6. The image of jealousy shown to the Prophet in this wonderful vision, signified idolatry in general, which provoked the LORD GOD to jealousy, by giving that honour to idols which was due to him alone.

Ver. 6 to 13. The Prophet here describes the three great superstitions which the Israelites had fallen into, that of the Egyptians, that of the Phœnicians, and that of the Persians. The rites of the Egyptian idolatry were performed by the ancient and honourable of the people in a mystic cave, called by the Prophet, ver. 7, a *hole*, or chamber in the wall, in which were represented by figures those creeping and abominable beasts they worshipped, such as serpents, dogs, cats, &c. with *Apis* the sacred bull, and *Isis* and *Osiris*, under the figure of two calves, one *male*, the other *female*. The Phœnicians worshipped

worshipped an idol which they supposed to preside as a god over the fruits of the earth, and who suffered when trees, &c. were cut down, on which account women mourned for him several days at the end of harvest. These are alluded to *ver. 13*. The Persian worship performed by the priests and magi, consisted chiefly in adoration paid to the sun, with the faces of the worshippers turned towards the east, as described by the Prophet, *ver. 16*. These idolatries rendered the Jews abominable in the sight of God.

CHAPTER IX.

The man with the inkhorn, in this vision, is considered as an angel sent by the LORD to mark his faithful servants to be preserved from destruction.

CHAPTER X.

The LORD's appearing upon his throne giving directions to the ministering angels to scatter coals over the city of Jerusalem, denoted that it would be burnt, and showed that the destruction of it would proceed from God himself. The glory of the LORD, represented *ver. 18, 19*, removing from the Temple to heaven, signified that the protection of God would be withdrawn from the Temple at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter gives the continuation of Ezekiel's vision begun in the former chapter.

Ver. 1 to 13. The judgments of God are here denounced against those wicked persons who made a mock of the types and predictions of the Prophet.

Ver. 13 to 22. In these verses God promises to favour those who were gone into captivity, and intimates the general restoration and conversion of the nation in after times.

Ver. 22 to the end. The LORD is here described as withdrawing his glory from the city, as he before had done from the Temple, which implied that God was going to forsake Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 8. The Prophet here foretels by types, instead of words, the approaching captivity of Judah.

Ver. 8 to 17. The flight, captivity, and sufferings of Zedekiah and his followers, are here foretold; *see Jeremiah, chap. lii. ver. 11.* Observe, that the Prophet, *ver. 13,* foretels that the king of Judah, who was Zedekiah, should be carried to Babylon, but should not *see it.* Jeremiah foretold, *chap. xxxiv. ver. 3,* that *Zedekiah's eyes should behold the king of Babylon;* both these predictions were fulfilled, for Zedekiah's eyes were put out after he had seen the king, and before he was carried to Babylon.

Ver. 17 to 20. The Prophet was to eat his bread with trembling, as a sign of the terrors of the Jews when surrounded by their enemies.

Ver. 20 to the end. Observe here, how the Prophet answers the objection of the scoffers and infidels who either disbelieved his threatenings, or supposed the accomplishment of them to be at a great distance.

CHAPTER XIII

Observe, that this chapter denounces heavy judgments against those lying prophets who flattered the people in the midst of their sin and danger with false hopes of peace and security. At the latter end of the chapter, woes are denounced against false *propheteesses*, by whom were meant women who practised witchcrafts and divinations, like the heathen, with a view of promoting their gains by deceiving the people. What is said concerning *pillows* and *kerchiefs*, alluded to some ancient heathen practices which are not now understood.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that God here threatens those hypocrites who pretended to attend to his Prophet while they loved and practised idolatry. It appears from these verses that the LORD threatened to inspire the false Prophets to utter things which should deceive them and the people who consulted

consulted them. Not with *falsehoods* we may be very sure, but with truths given in such a dark manner that idol worshippers could not understand their meaning.

Ver. 12 to the end. GOD here declares that when he should resolve to punish a country by any of his plagues the good people in that country might be preserved, but could not save others, which was meant to show particularly that the ruin of Jerusalem was certain. The honourable mention of Noah, Daniel, and Job, shows that the intercession of good men has great power with GOD, though it would not have prevailed for the saving of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XV.

Observe, that this chapter agrees with our Saviour's discourse in the *15th chapter of St. John's Gospel*, wherein he makes use of the same similitude of a vine branch that is fit for nothing but to be burnt, to denote wicked people.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ezekiel, in this chapter, makes use of the comparison of an adulterous woman, to show that GOD had chosen the Jews, and had heaped many favours upon them, but they had dealt very treacherously by him, and had particularly by their idolatry broken the covenant he made with them.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 11. The parable in these verses is explained by those that follow them.

Ver. 11 to 22. Observe, in this explanation of the vision, the agreement of the predictions contained in it with those in *Isaiah, chap. xxxi. ver. 1, 2,* and *Jeremiah, chap. xxxii. ver. 5;* and *xxxiv. ver. 3,* and remember that they were exactly fulfilled.

Ver. 22 to the end. In these verses the Messiah is prophesied of under the similitude of a *branch*, and it is intimated that his kingdom will be universal, that the Gentiles will be admitted into it, and the Jews restored. Observe, that this prophecy bears great resemblance to our Saviour's parable of the grain of mustard seed; see *St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. xiii. ver. 31.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

It appears that the words, in *ver. 2*, *the fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*, was a proverb which the Jews of that time used, to signify, that it was not for their own crimes that the judgments of God were threatened and sent, but for those of their fathers; and that their fathers had entailed wickedness upon them. This notion the Prophet condemns and corrects, by showing them that children of wicked parents may be good and virtuous, and that no child shall bear the iniquity of his father to the injury of his soul, though he may, in consequence of his father's transgressions, be involved in temporal evils, such as poverty and disease, which is the meaning of *visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation*, as the second commandment threatens. God is infinitely good, always ready to pardon even those who have committed the greatest crimes, provided they forsake them, and for the future keep his commandments; but we must remember that *repentance* is required, and that there is no repentance effectual, but that which produces amendment of heart and a change of inclination, followed by actual amendment and reformation.

This chapter, if read with attention, is sufficient to convince any reasonable person that the doctrine of absolute predestination to eternal misery, is contrary to what God has graciously revealed concerning his disposition and dealings with mankind; we must therefore never think that God would by his Prophet call upon people to repent and turn from their evil ways if they had not the power to do it; or that he would condemn any soul to everlasting misery for the sins of others.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 10. This parable describes the fate of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachim. The lionsess is the land of Judah. The first of the young lions, was Jehoahaz, deposed by the king of Egypt; see *2 Kings, chap. xxiii. ver. 33*. The second lion was Jehoiakim, whose rebellion drew upon him the vengeance of the king of Babylon; see *2 Kings, chap. xxiv. ver. 1, &c.*

Ver.

Ver. 10 to the end. In this second parable the vine is the Jewish nation which long prospered, its land being fertile, its princes powerful, and its people flourishing; but the judgments of God had at that time destroyed a great part of the people, and doomed the rest to captivity. The *fire* in the last verse alludes to Zedekiah's rebellion, which instigated the king of Babylon to put an end to his kingdom.

CHAPTER XX.

Observe in this chapter, that God refused to be consulted by the elders of Israel on account of the frequent rebellions and provocations of them and their forefathers. Observe, in particular, *ver. 11, 12, 16, 19, 20, 21*, which show the nature of their offences, for which judgments were threatened and sent; and how repeatedly sabbath-breaking is mentioned as one of the sins which brought down the divine vengeance upon them.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 18. The words *I will draw forth my sword out of his sheath*, *ver. 3*, signified no more than that the Lord would suffer their enemies to slay them. The Lord calls the wicked *his sword*, when he makes them his instrument for cutting off those, whom for their sins, he has devoted to destruction. This prophecy foretold that there would be a very great slaughter of the principal men of Judah.

Ver. 18 to 24. The king of Babylon is here described as consulting his idols, and casting lots which nation he should attack, the Jews or the Ammonites, and the LORD himself directing the lot to fall upon Jerusalem. This teaches us that God determines the fate of nations.

Ver. 24 to 28. The profane prince, *ver. 25*, meant king Zedekiah, who is here again declared to be given up, and his kingdom to be destroyed.

Ver. 28 to the end. This prophecy respecting the Ammonites was fulfilled five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXII.

This chapter contains a catalogue of the crimes which prevailed in Jerusalem among the princes, people, and ministers of religion. Observe, that these sins deprived them of the divine protection, and drew the vengeance of God upon them. These sins God still abhors, particularly in Christians, and we may be certain that he will not fail to bring his judgments upon every nation that corrupts itself by them. How careful then should every individual be not to practise any of them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter relates to the idolatries of Samaria and Jerusalem, in which the Prophet shows how detestable the abominations were which the people of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah practised.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 15. Observe, that though Ezekiel was in Chaldea, and very far from Jerusalem, God revealed to him the very day in which the king of Babylon had begun the siege of Jerusalem, by which it appears that God perfectly knows all that passes in the world. The fate of that city is described in this chapter by an apt similitude. The *pot* signifies Jerusalem; the *flesh* and *pieces*, the inhabitants; the *coals* and the *water*, the calamities they were to endure.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that as another sign of the greatness of the calamities, the Prophet was desired not to mourn for the death of his wife; which signified, that the sufferings of the Jews would be so great and general that their relations would not be able to lament the death of each other. In *ver. 27*, the Prophet intimates that he was to speak to the Israelites no more till they should hear of those prophecies being fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXV.

The predictions in this chapter against the Ammonites, Moabites, and Philistines, for their hatred of God's people,
were

were fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 7. When the heathen nations triumphed at the downfall of Jerusalem, they did it as idolaters, rejoicing that the God of Israel, as they supposed, was overcome by their false gods, and no longer able to maintain the honour of his chosen people; therefore the Prophets were inspired to foretell, that so far from his power being lessened, they would feel the effects of it in their own destruction. The city of Tyre, here called Tyrus, was threatened with destruction on this account.

Ver. 7 to the end. Observe, that Nebuchadnezzar was to be the conqueror of Tyre, the same who had conquered Jerusalem, because Tyre had rejoiced to see Jerusalem laid waste by the king of Babylon. This prophecy represents Tyre as a very rich and flourishing city, indulging at that time in all the voluptuousness of a state of high prosperity; but, observe, it was by its desolation to be a terror to the isles.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter, as far as *ver. 29*, is a continuation of the prophecy in the former chapter.

Ver. 1 to 26. These verses describe the vast commerce of the Tyrians and their immense riches.

Ver. 26 to the end. These verses foretold how astonished every one would be at the destruction of Tyre.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 20. Observe, what is said of the pride of the king of Tyre. It appears from the prophecy that he had divine honours paid him as a God.

Ver. 20 to 24. These verses announce the fall of Sidon, the mother city of Tyre.

Ver. 24 to the end. These verses contain promises of deliverance to the people of Israel to all their enemies.

From the prophecies respecting Tyre, we learn that that city was exceedingly powerful on account of its extreme commerce, its immense riches, and its alliance with almost all the

nations of the world; yet the Prophet foretold Tyre was soon to be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, who would take it and spoil it of all its glory; and history informs us that a few years after this prophecy was delivered, Nebuchadnezzar went against this city; he besieged it for *thirteen years*, and at length destroyed it in such a manner that it was not rebuilt. This we must consider as the work of God, as it was foretold with all its circumstances by the Prophet Ezekiel eighteen years before, and by Isaiah above an hundred and twenty years; see *Isaiah, chap. xxiii.* also *Jeremiah, chap. xxv. ver. 22.* A new city, called Tyre, was built on the island afterwards, which was destroyed by Alexander the Great. This conqueror used all the stones, rubbish, and earth, of the old city in making a causeway to join the continent to the island, by which means he became master of the city, and fulfilled that part of the prediction which said *her very dust should be scraped together, and her timber and her earth laid in the midst of the waters, chap. xxvi. ver. 4, 12.* At present, and for many ages back, this great city is and has been a *bare rock to spread nets upon*, as the Prophet foretold, *chap. xxvi. ver. 5.* Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches who subsist chiefly upon fishing, and harbour themselves in vaults, and who seem to be preserved in this place by divine Providence as a visible proof of the truth of God's word concerning Tyre. Observe, that in the account here given of the commerce, riches, and opulence of Tyre, we have a picture of the present state of Great Britain. May this happy island take warning by the fate of Tyre, and avoid the crimes which brought the divine vengeance upon it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

This and the following chapters foretel the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. The same thing was foretold by *Jeremiah, chap. xli. ver. 13, &c.* and it was accomplished in the 27th year of the captivity of Jehoiachim, king of Judah. It seems Pharaoh Hophra had set himself up as a God, and had boasted of his great power. The Prophet addresses him, *ver. 3,* as one of the crocodiles, a dreadful creature, which the Nile, a famous river of Egypt, abounds. Observe, *ver. 14, 15,* that Egypt, though it was to be inhabited

habited after forty years, was to continue afterwards the basest of kingdoms; and from that time Egypt has produced nothing great or remarkable, but has continued a base kingdom without any prince of its own, and always subject to foreigners; and the Egyptians are possessed with a notion that slaves must always rule, and the natives be subject.

CHAPTER XXX.

Observe, *ver. 5*, that the Prophet foretold the ruin not only of Egypt but of its allies, the people of Ethiopia, Lybia, &c. Observe also, *ver. 13*, that the destruction of the idols of Egypt was threatened, and that in this and the following verses the principal cities of Egypt, Noph, Pathros, Sin, No, &c. &c. are named as devoted to destruction.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Prophet here represents, by the comparison of a fine large cedar tree, the fall of the king of Assyria; and concludes with telling the king of Egypt this was a picture of what would befall him and his people.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1 to 11. The expressions in these verses are figurative. The stars that were to be put out, *ver. 7*, signified the great men of different kingdoms, and the Sun and Moon either the idols which were worshipped in these luminaries, or the king and queen of Egypt.

Ver. 11 to 17. These verses showed that it was by the Babylonians the Egyptians were to be vanquished. Observe, *ver. 15*, that it was to make them know and confess that the God of Israel is the LORD, that these judgments, like the plagues in the days of Moses, were sent upon the Egyptians.

Ver. 17 to the end. By *hell*, to which the different nations are said to have been sent, we may understand the place of the dead; though whole nations were cut off, the final condemnation of individuals will not take place till the last day. All that was foretold of Egypt came exactly to pass; Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt after he had taken the city of Tyre; the Egyptians were carried into captivity, and at the end of forty years they returned into their own country under

Amasis their king : but the kingdom of Egypt did not recover its former splendour, and it was afterwards kept low, and made subject to foreign powers as Ezekiel had foretold, and so it continues to the present day. The completion of these prophecies is an additional proof that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired. God saw fit to foretel by Ezekiel and the other Prophets the destruction of Egypt, that the Jews might acknowledge God as the supreme LORD of the universe, and that they had in vain put their trust in the Egyptians.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that these verses strongly point out the manner of the Lord's dealings, both with respect to the ministers of religion, and the individuals of whom their flocks are composed. Every minister is properly a watchman over the people committed to his care, and it is his duty to admonish and reprove them ; but if they continue in their sins notwithstanding, their wickedness rests on their own heads, the minister has nothing to answer for to God on their account.

Ver. 10 to 20. These verses should be very attentively considered, as doctrine the very reverse of that which is here given, is taught by many of the present day, especially by those men who set themselves up as preachers of the Gospel, without being regularly ordained ministers. They teach that a very small part of mankind were predestinated, before they were created, to eternal happiness in heaven, and all the rest of the human race condemned to everlasting torments in hell ; that the grace of God is given only to those who are predestinated to everlasting salvation, and that those who have once had divine grace cannot fall off from it, and that no sin will be imputed to them ; but that those from whom it is withheld cannot do the least thing to please God. Observe, how very different the Lord's words by the Prophet Ezekiel are here, and never suffer yourself to be persuaded to adopt such erroneous opinions which are an offence to the goodness, the mercy, and the justice of God.

Ver. 20 to 30. Observe, in the three first of these verses, the remarkable fulfilment of a prediction in *chap. xxiv. ver. 25 to the end.* Observe also, that as soon as the Prophet was again

again inspired to declare the words of the Lord concerning Judea, he pronounced that the whole land would be desolated.

Ver. 30 to the end. In these verses those who mock and scoff at the Prophets are threatened with severe judgments.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1 to 11. The false shepherds here threatened were the Prophets, ministers, and magistrates of Israel, who instead of taking care of the people occasioned their ruin.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe, that in these verses God promises to take the charge of his people upon himself, and to give them good shepherds, and above all, to send a great shepherd who should redeem his people, and make them everlastingly happy. Observe also, *ver. 23*, that it intimated that this great shepherd should be of the house of David. Our blessed Saviour applied this prophecy to himself when he said, *I am the good shepherd, &c.*; see *John, chap. x. ver. 11.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

This prophecy is against the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, whose country was Mount Seir. The threatening here denounced was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar, the same king who had laid waste Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe in these verses, as well as from many other parts of the prophetic writings, that though God permitted the heathens to go against the Israelites, and even made use of them as instruments for their punishment, he did not approve of the disposition and behaviour of those nations towards them, because they went (as it is expressed in *ver. 5*) against Judea as the Lord's land, with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds to cast it out for a prey, and they also exalted their idols above the true God, therefore, the Lord threatened to cast those nations down, and fulfilled his threatenings.

Ver. 8 to 16. The prophecy in these verses was for the comfort and encouragement of the remnant of Israel who were in captivity, and it had its fulfilment in part when

Jerusalem was rebuilt and the Jews were restored to their own land, but it will have a further fulfilment at the second coming of our Saviour.

Ver. 16 to 21. Observe, in these verses, on what account the Lord's judgments were sent upon Israel, upon those who were the peculiar people of the Lord, and that even those of the captivity dishonoured the LORD among the heathens.

Ver. 21 to 25. Observe here, that the Prophet was inspired to tell the remnant of Judah that when the Lord should fulfil the promises he had made to them, they were not to regard their restoration to their own land as a reward for any merit in them, but as an act of mercy, and for the maintenance of his honour among the heathen.

Ver. 25 to the end. The blessings of Christ's kingdom are promised in these verses.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ver. 1 to 15. Under the emblem of dead and withered bones is represented the hopeless state of the Jews in their captivity, and especially in their general dispersion, and their restoration to a flourishing condition in their own land; the future conversion of the Jews in the latter days, and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Divine grace is also represented by the recovery of these bones; and the emblem may be applied to the general resurrection of mankind from the dead. We should learn from it that nothing is impossible with God.

Ver. 15 to the end. The emblem of the two sticks signify the union of the tribes of Israel in the kingdom of the Messiah. This has in part been fulfilled by the conversion of many of the Jews to Christianity, but it will have a fuller completion hereafter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

This prophecy relates to a period yet very distant, and it is therefore very obscure. There is one very like it in the 20th chapter of the Book of Revelations.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Prophet here goes on to denounce the judgments of God against the enemies of his church and people, and concludes with a promise of future restoration to Israel.

CHAPTER XL.

In this and the following chapters, to the end of the Book, Ezekiel relates a vision which he had fourteen years after the taking of Jerusalem, wherein are described the Temple, and the service that was to be performed in it; the division of the land of Canaan to the twelve tribes of Israel, together with a view of the new city.

What has not been fulfilled of this prophecy of Ezekiel is supposed to refer to the future glorious state of the church.

DANIEL.

THIS Prophet was descended from the royal family of Judah, and was carried to Babylon when he was very young with king Jehoiachin, by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel lived at Babylon six hundred years before the coming of our Saviour, and died in a very advanced age. He was in great favour with the kings of Babylon, and afterwards with Cyrus and Darius the conquerors of Babylon; and was the only prophet we read of who enjoyed any great share of worldly prosperity. Even in his youth he was highly esteemed for his extraordinary piety and virtue. The Prophet makes honourable mention of him, and our blessed LORD speaks of him as a prophet; *see Ezekiel, chap. xiv. ver. 14. Matthew, chap. xxiv. ver. 15.*

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 3. Observe, that these verses agree with the 24th chapter of the 2d Book of Kings, and the 36th chapter of the 2d Book of Chronicles.

Ver. 3 to 8. The master of the eunuchs was the person who was over the king's household. It was certainly ordered, by the providence of God, that Daniel should be educated in the court of the king of Babylon. It was at that time the custom for conquerors to change the names of their captives; those given to Daniel and his friends had a relation to the idols of the Babylonians, as their former ones had to the true God.

Ver. 8 to 17. Observe, these four, though very young men, resolved to keep stedfastly to the commandments of God, and on no account to eat of any thing that was forbidden by the law of Moses; and they had probably another reason for refusing the king's meat, because the idolaters had a custom of making an offering to their false gods of part of their meat before they ate or drank.

Ver. 17 to the end. The learning of the Chaldeans consisted chiefly of astrology (a kind of fortune-telling by the stars), the art of building, and the art of war; and some of the Chaldeans professed to have skill in magic, or conjuring, by communication with evil spirits: this was all deceit, and of course they would not let Daniel and his friends into those secrets by which they imposed upon the ignorant. Observe, what an excellent pattern Daniel and his three friends set to young persons to be steady to the principles of the true religion, and to resist every temptation which they meet with to draw them from their duty. *Ver. 20.* The wisdom they had was better than that of the astrologers and magicians, because it was given them by God.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 14. God, who had raised up Nebuchadnezzar to be the instrument of his providence in bringing about great events, was pleased, by means of a dream, to reveal to him what should afterwards happen; and that he might not suppose it to be a common dream, and pay no attention to it, God caused him to forget the circumstances of it, but to have an earnest desire to recollect them and know their import. Observe, that those who were called *wise men*, having none but human wisdom, could not inform the king of what the Almighty only could reveal.

Ver.

Ver. 14 to 24. Observe, that God, who had sent the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and made him forget it, revealed the particulars of it to Daniel, together with the interpretation, which proved the means of saving the lives of Daniel and his three friends, and of showing at the same time that their God was the true God. Observe, Daniel's thanksgivings, *ver. 20, &c.* which shows what notions he entertained of the Divine Majesty, and how Christians ought to think of God.

Ver. 24 to 36. Daniel's answer to the king showed that he had received a revelation from the God of heaven, which as a prophet he was about to deliver. The dream, as here described, was a very awful one, and the interpretation was a most remarkable prophecy which has been exactly fulfilled.

Ver. 36 to 44. By the different emblems of metals and stones, God intended to represent to Nebuchadnezzar four great empires that were to be in the world. First, the Assyrian, or Chaldeans, over which Nebuchadnezzar had dominion, represented by the *head of gold*; secondly, the Persian represented by the *silver*; thirdly, the Grecian represented by the *brass*; and fourthly, the Roman represented by the *iron*. These empires did accordingly succeed each other, and their histories answer wonderfully to the prophecy. The toes of the image signified ten lesser kingdoms, into which the Roman empire should be divided.

Ver. 44 to 46. The kingdom which was never to be destroyed, represented by *a stone cut out of a mountain without hands*, was the kingdom of the Messiah. This part of the prophecy has been fulfilled in respect to its consuming all these kingdoms, but it will have a fuller completion by the conversion of all nations to Christianity.

Ver. 46 to the end. Observe, that Nebuchadnezzar and his people had now the true God revealed to them, yet they did not leave off idolatry, as the very next chapter shows; but Daniel's interpretation of his dream made Nebuchadnezzar favourable to the Jews who were at Babylon. Observe, that this chapter clearly shows that the raising and overturning of kingdoms and states, and the various changes that happen in the world proceed from God's overruling providence, who has always in view the goodness of his church, and of those that fear him.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 8. The image which Nebuchadnezzar set up was an idol; it was with the pedestal it stood upon, thirty yards in height. By *dedicating it*, is meant that he set it up as a God, and required worship to be paid to it as such. The folly of this is finely described by the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. xlv. Idolatry and superstition are always cruel and extravagant; and in Nebuchadnezzar we have the picture of haughty, idolatrous, and persecuting princes.

Ver. 8 to 19. Observe here, the faith and piety of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. When their duty to God was concerned, they did not deliberate what course to take, but boldly at once exposed their lives for the glory of God, and in the defence of true religion.

Ver. 19 to 26. Observe, that it pleased God to make the cruel and idolatrous Chaldeans feel the effects of his power, which rendered the miracle he wrought in vindication of his own honour more visible. God, who never wants power to deliver those that suffer for his sake, supports his children under their afflictions, is with them in the greatest dangers, and gives them a happy issue out of them.

Ver. 26 to the end. Observe, that though Nebuchadnezzar was again convinced of the almighty power and majesty of God, he did not forsake his idols, or take down the golden image. The *Song of the Three Holy Children*, in the Apocrypha, agrees with this history of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and part of this song is admitted into the Common Prayer Book as a hymn of praise to Almighty God. It was above twenty years after Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that these good men were thrown into the burning fiery furnace.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, *ver. 1, 2*, the proclamation which Nebuchadnezzar made in acknowledgment of the almighty power and infinite majesty of God, of which he was fully convinced. What is here related happened about ten years after Nebuchadnezzar set up the golden image, when he was
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in the height of his power and glory, having conquered all the neighbouring nations, according to the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The Almighty saw fit to give him notice, by means of another significant dream, that he designed to humble him, in order that he might know his punishment came from God, and Daniel was made the interpreter of it. Observe, that on this occasion the king was able to recollect his dream. Though Nebuchadnezzar could not understand the full import of the dream, he could discern enough to trouble his mind.

Ver. 19 to 28. The interpretation of the dream is so plain and clear as to want no explanation. By the *watcher* and an *holy one*, *ver. 23*, is understood an angel. *Seven times* signified *seven years*. If Nebuchadnezzar would have followed the Prophet's advice in *ver. 27*, the threatened judgment would not have been sent upon him.

Ver. 28 to the end Babylon was a very magnificent city; Isaiah calls it the glory of kingdoms. It was sixty miles in compass, enclosed with a wall at least two hundred feet high, and fifty broad, so that six chariots could drive abreast on it. The city was fortified every where with towers, and secured by an hundred gates of brass, and was adorned with temples, palaces, and hanging gardens, which were the wonder of the world. Nebuchadnezzar gloried in all this as if he had obtained all his magnificence by his own power. Observe, that the judgments of the Almighty fell upon him while he was exalting his own majesty. By this judgment he was deprived of his reason, and reduced to a state of madness, which rendered him for a time unfit for human society. This event is mentioned by heathen historians as well as by the Prophet Daniel, and the true cause of it was, as we are told, *ver. 17*, that *Nebuchadnezzar might know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

The history of Nebuchadnezzar shows that the victories and successes of the greatest princes and conquerors are no proofs of their own superior merit, since the most high sometimes sets up *the basest of mankind* for wise purposes, but especially when he sees fit to employ them as scourges to wicked nations. Read here *2 Kings, chap. xxvi. ver. 27 to the end*, and *Jeremiah, chap. lii. ver. 31*.

CHAPTER V.

Several kings reigned in Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar; first, Evilmerodach, the son of this monarch; then Neriglissar, a very learned and good prince; after him Laberofarched, a wicked and foolish prince, who about nine months after he came to the throne was killed by some of his own subjects, then Belshazzar, who is supposed to have been the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was placed on the throne. Belshazzar was very young, and of a dissolute turn of mind, but his mother Nitocris, who was a woman of superior understanding and courage, undertook the chief part of the government herself, and did all in her power to fortify the country against the Medes; but Cyrus went on taking towns and provinces from the king of Babylon, and had great successes against other nations. At length having gained a great victory over Belshazzar, Cyrus shut him up in his capital by surrounding it with his army: this was in the sixteenth year of Belshazzar's reign. The Babylonian empire was now drawing to a conclusion, and the judgments of God threatened so long before by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, were ready to be executed.

Ver. 1 to 5. Belshazzar showed himself to be both a weak and a wicked prince by revelling and feasting when his capital city was besieged, and on the brink of ruin; but he thought that it was sufficiently secured by the gates of brass, the numerous fortifications, and the river Euphrates. Observe, that by calling for the *holy vessels*, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple at Jerusalem, to drink out of, in praise of his idols, he put an open affront upon the God of Israel, who knowing beforehand what he would do, had prepared his punishment, so that it might soon follow his crime.

Ver. 5 to 10. Observe, that God caused a hand to appear, writing Belshazzar's condemnation; that this prodigy, and Daniel's explanation of it, might convince the idolatrous people that the same God whose Temple Nebuchadnezzar, the grandfather of Belshazzar, had destroyed, and whom they had themselves dishonoured, was going to overthrow the empire of the Chaldeans. Belshazzar's great confusion at the sight of the hand, shows how weak and timorous a guilty conscience

conscience makes a man ; and that the divine judgments overtake the ungodly when they think themselves most secure.

Ver. 10 to 25. The Queen who came into the banqueting room was Nitocris, the king's mother. Observe, that she looked upon Daniel as a holy man.

Ver. 25 to 33. The word *Peres* is of the same signification as *Upharsin*. Observe, that the interpretation conveyed dreadful intelligence to Belshazzar, yet he performed his word, and Daniel accepted the honour which had been promised to whoever should read the hand-writing and interpret the words, in order that by doing so he might glorify God, whose prophet and minister he was.

Ver. 30 to the end. When Belshazzar was slain, and Babylon taken by Cyrus, who commanded the armies of the Medes and Persians, there was an end put to the Babylonian and Chaldean empire ; and that of the Medes and Persians was set up in its stead, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel has related this in very few words ; but the Prophets who wrote before him give a full account of every particular, as you may read in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning Babylon, for there is no doubt but that all which God threatened came exactly to pass. The Babylonish empire was destroyed after it had continued two hundred years, just fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem. The *head of gold*, which Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of, was now broken in pieces, according to the prediction of Daniel. Cyrus, as long as his uncle Darius lived, yielded him the first place of honour in the empire, though he himself had been the chief instrument in the hand of Providence for obtaining Babylon ; on this account it is said that Darius, the Median, took the kingdom.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 18. By accepting the high posts to which he was appointed, Daniel had frequent opportunities of serving his captive countrymen. Observe, that no danger could intimidate the Prophet from doing his duty, he continued to worship God, and he did it publicly, instead of secretly, lest he should dishonour God by appearing to comply with the impious

impious decrees Darius had been prevailed upon to sign. God permitted Daniel to be cast into the lion's den, that he might show forth his own almighty power, and reward the faithfulness of his servants.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that another heathen king was compelled by this miraculous deliverance to acknowledge, as Nebuchadnezzar had formerly done, the almighty power and universal dominion of Daniel's God. Observe, by what wonderful means the LORD made himself known, and maintained the honour of his great name in heathen nations, and how he made use of professed idolaters to spread his fame abroad into distant regions.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 9. These verses agree with Nebuchadnezzar's dream, only that the four great empires are here represented under the emblems of beasts instead of metals. *Horns*, in these verses, signify kingdoms; see *Daniel*, chap. ii.

Ver. 9 to 15. These verses relate to the kingdom, to which all other kingdoms were to give place, represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream under the emblem of a stone cut out of a mountain without hands. By the Ancient of days, *ver. 9*, is meant the Lord God, who appeared to Daniel in the vision, as he was afterwards seen by St. John the Evangelist in his visions; see *Revelations*, chap. xiii. *ver. 5*; chap. xx. *ver. 4*: and as Ezekiel also saw the Lord in his visions. The Son of Man coming to the Ancient of days, *ver. 13*, may be understood to relate to the Lord God, in the person of the Messiah.

Ver. 15 to the end. These extraordinary visions troubled Daniel till they were explained to him by an angel: the prophecy has been in a great measure fulfilled by the four empires succeeding each other, namely, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, and by the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. The Roman empire was also divided into ten kingdoms, according to the toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the ten horns in this vision of Daniel, as is proved by the histories of this empire, written by heathen authors; but it is not material for persons who have but little leisure, to try to understand these prophecies in all their parts: indeed they cannot be understood

understood at present, because they are not yet fully accomplished. But what we ought to learn from them is, that Daniel spoke by divine inspiration; that all future things are perfectly known to God, and that he rules over all things. We should also remember that amongst all the revolutions which were to take place in the world, God had in view the establishment of his own kingdom among men, and that he made all events instrumental to this great end.

CHAPTER VIII.

The prophecy contained in this chapter has been fully accomplished. The empire of the Medes and Persians was raised to a great height, but was destroyed by Alexander the Great, who conquered Darius, king of Persia, many years after this prophecy was delivered. The monarchy of Alexander was after his death divided into four principal kingdoms; and from one of them, which was that of Syria, rose up Antiochus who cruelly persecuted the Jews, and put a stop to divine service for three years and a half; after which the Jews were delivered from his persecution, the Temple was purified, and Antiochus suffered the effects of the divine vengeance. God was pleased to reveal all this to Daniel that, when this persecution came upon them, the Jews might bear it with constancy in the hope of the promised deliverance.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 20. The books, from which Daniel learnt that the captivity of the Jews would continue seventy years, were the Prophecies of Jeremiah; *see Jeremiah, chap. xxv. ver. 12. chap. xxix. ver. 10.* These seventy years, reckoning from the time Daniel himself was carried captive to Babylon, were nearly expired; he therefore poured out his soul to God in fervent prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. Like this good Prophet should every sincere member of the church be concerned for its welfare, and pray for its prosperity.

Ver. 20 to the end. The prophecy contained in these verses is one of the most remarkable in the Bible, for it points out the exact time that was to pass between the decree for rebuilding Jerusalem, and the death of the Messiah. By
seventy

seventy weeks are to be understood seventy times seven years, viz. four hundred and ninety years: at the end of this time, the Messiah was to come to make atonement for sin by his death, and to establish and confirm the covenant of God with men; after which Jerusalem was to be destroyed, the measure of its iniquity being full. All these things have been exactly fulfilled. The Temple was rebuilding from the time the decree was first made by Cyrus, seven weeks of years, that is, forty-nine years—sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years after this, the MESSIAH was manifested by the preaching of John the Baptist: and one week, or seven years added to this, our LORD was crucified, amounting in all to four hundred and ninety years. Yet the Jews are so blinded as still to expect the Messiah, who has *been cut off, but not for himself, and after suffering for the sins of the world is entered into glory*. Such a prophecy as this is sufficient of itself to confirm the truth of the Christian religion, as it shows in the clearest manner that JESUS is the promised Messiah, who hath redeemed us by his death, and it should strongly engage us to believe in him as our SAVIOUR, and to follow his heavenly doctrine.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 10. The glorious being who appeared to Daniel in this vision was either an angel or the LORD himself. What he revealed is understood as relating to the ending of the Persian empire, and the establishment of the Grecian monarchy under Alexander the Great. The afflictions and fasting of Daniel, who mourned three weeks, showed his zeal for the restoration of the Jews. Observe, that it is the character of pious religious persons to afflict themselves when the glory of God is obstructed, and to offer up prayers for the peace and prosperity of the church. By the words of the angel, *ver. 11*, and *ver. 23, of the 9th chapter*, we see how God loves those that fear him, and serve him faithfully; and what regard he has to their prayers and their sorrows. From this chapter we may learn that God makes use of the ministry of angels to execute his designs, and for the good of those he is pleased to bless.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter is a continuation of the prophecy in the foregoing one.

Ver. 1 to 5. These verses foretel the ending of the Persian empire and the establishment of the Grecian by Alexander the Great; the dividing of that empire after his death, and the wars there would be between the kings of Syria and Egypt; also the reign of Antiochus king of Syria, and his persecution of the Jews; his attempts to abolish the divine worship, and set up idolatry; likewise the destruction of that cruel and impious prince.

Ver. 5 to the end. These verses cannot be clearly understood without a knowledge of the history of those times to which it relates; but those who are acquainted with that history find in them an exact account of the fulfilment of this prophecy, and convincing proofs of the divine authority of the Scriptures.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter foretels that after all the great revolutions which were to be brought to pass in the kingdoms of the earth, there will be a general resurrection from the dead, when the faithful servants of God will receive a glorious reward, and the wicked will be punished according to their deserts. Observe, that the latter part of the chapter was to be a *sealed book till the end of TIME*, and it will not be fully explained till the events happen to which it relates. Daniel was about ninety-four years of age when he saw the last vision, and is supposed to have died soon after.

HOSEA.

HOSEA is the first of those which are called the twelve minor Prophets, whose writings all together made, what was called by the Jews, *the Book of the Prophets*. Hosea prophesied for

about sixty years, in the kingdom of Israel, much about the same time as Isaiah prophesied in the kingdom of Judah.

CHAPTERS I, II, III.

The prophecies in these three chapters must be considered as emblematical, not as real circumstances; they relate chiefly to the idolatries of the Jewish nation, and may be passed over as they relate entirely to the Jews, and foretel, but under different images, what other Prophets also foretold. Observe, in what king's reign Hosea prophesied.

CHAPTER IV.

Hosea here declares that God provoked by the many abominations which prevailed in the kingdom of Israel, even among the priests, and particularly by idolatry, which is here called adultery and whoredom, would shortly destroy that kingdom; and he exhorts the men of Judah not to imitate the ten tribes in their idolatry, and in the impieties committed at Gilgal and Bethaven.

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter the Prophet reproves the priests, princes, and magistrates, for leading the people into those sins which would be their ruin.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter contains an exhortation to the Israelites with promises that God would have pity upon them if they would truly repent.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter reproves the Israelites for manifold sins, and denounces God's wrath against them for their hypocrisy.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter contains more threatenings against the ten tribes of Israel, because they had rebelled against God by setting up kings who were not appointed of the Lord, Shal-lum, Menahem, and Pekaiah; and by worshipping the golden calves, and seeking help from the Assyrians.

CHAPTER IX.

The substance of this chapter is that the Israelites, because they had forsaken God to worship idols, should be driven out of their own land, and that they would bring upon their children a desolation which they would never recover.

CHAPTER X.

The people of Israel are here reprov'd and threatened for their impiety and idolatry.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter shows the ingratitude of the Israelites, and the numerous sins which provoked God to deliver them into the hand of the king of Assyria.

CHAPTER XII.

The Prophet here reprov's Israel and Judah, reminds the tribes of former favours bestowed upon them by the Lord, and exhorts them to repentance.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Prophet here shows that the ten tribes were deprived of their power as a nation, and were no longer a terror to their enemies, on account of their idolatries, and foretels that Samaria, their capital city, should be laid waste.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Prophet here exhorts the people of Israel to turn to God with repentance, and not to put their trust in the Assyrians, but to renounce the worship of idols; and promises a return of the divine favour to those who should be converted. The use we are to make of the warnings contained in this book of prophecy is expressed in the last verse of this chapter.

JOEL.

JOEL prophesied in the kingdom of Judah; it is not exactly known at what time, but it is supposed to have been at the same time with Hosea. The occasion of his prophecy was an extraordinary drought and famine which happened in the kingdom of Judah.

CHAPTER I.

This chapter, with the beginning of the next, contains a double prophecy: 1st, relating to a plague of locusts which was to devour the land, and to be accompanied by a severe drought and famine, 2d, the invasion of the kingdom of Judah by the Chaldeans. Observe, that we are here taught to consider drought, vermin, and famine, as judgments from God for national sins, and that when the judgments of God fall upon a nation, all the people of the land, high and low, rich and great, should join together in acts of public humiliation, which, if accompanied with true repentance, will procure the pardon of God and, if he sees good, deliverance from the plague.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, in these verses, how terrible God's judgments are. The Prophet describes the calamities which were to fall upon the Jews by famine, by insects, and by the Chaldeans.

Ver. 12 to 18. Observe, that these verses point out that the way to obtain forgiveness of the LORD for national sins is first for every individual to express sincere sorrow and contrition, and promise amendment of life in their private prayers; and then for the people to assemble together with their priests and keep a solemn fast, or day of humiliation. Such days are appointed in Christian countries in times of war, and other public calamities, and they are solemnly observed by religious people; but in the present times too many are neglectful of this important duty, which is a melancholy thing not only for themselves, but for the nation to which

which they belong : those who disregard the chastisements of the LORD increase the measure of iniquity.

Ver. 18 to 28. The promises in these verses are very comfortable, for they show that the LORD will turn away his judgments if the people of a nation repent and humble themselves according to the Prophet's exhortation in the foregoing verses. Locusts and other insects are, in the *25th verse*, called the LORD's *great army*, on account of the destruction they make in a country ; and it is wonderful to think that the LORD, by his almighty power, can render the smallest creatures instruments of punishment, by causing the wind to blow in such a particular direction as to bring them in astonishing numbers, from desert places, to those parts which are cultivated by mankind for the support of themselves and their cattle.

Ver. 28 to the end. These verses relate to the descent of the HOLY GHOST upon the first Christians ; and St. Peter points out the accomplishment in his first sermon ; *see Acts, chap. ii. ver. 14 to 22.* By the great and terrible day of the LORD, may be understood the destruction of Jerusalem after our LORD's ascension into heaven. This is a very remarkable prophecy, and is supposed to have been delivered 800 years before our Saviour came into the world.

CHAPTER III.

The Prophet here foretold that GOD would bring the Jews again after their captivity into their own country ; would take vengeance upon their enemies for the cruelty and injustice they had practised towards them, and deliver his people and bless them abundantly. These prophecies were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, and the Edomites, Egyptians, and Babylonians, felt the effects of the divine vengeance ; but they will not be fully accomplished till the Jews are again restored to the favour of GOD.

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AMOS.

Amos prophesied at the same time with Hosea, though he is not supposed to have lived so long.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, *ver. 1*, that Amos was called to the prophetic office from being a herdsman at Tekoah, in the land of Judah.

The judgments denounced in this chapter against different nations were foretold by other prophets, and all fulfilled.

CHAPTER II.

The threatenings contained in this chapter were likewise fulfilled.

CHAPTER III.

Observe, what is said, *ver. 6*, which shows that all public evils and calamities are the dispensations of Providence; and we ought to acknowledge in all things the justice of God.

CHAPTER IV.

Observe, in the beginning of this chapter, that the great men in Israel are compared to full fed cattle, on account of their luxury and oppression, and are threatened with heavier judgments than had yet been sent upon them, on account of their impenitence. From this prophecy, and other parts of Scripture, we may learn that God calls men to repentance by divine corrections before he suffers his several judgments to fall upon them.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that in this chapter the Prophet informs the people of Israel how they might escape the judgments he denounced against them. He tells them all their solemn feast days and sacrifices were offences to him, because they did not offer

offer him the worship of their hearts ; from which we learn that it is of no use to pretend to worship God if we trample upon his laws.

CHAPTER VI.

The rebukes and threatenings in this chapter are chiefly addressed to the rich and great people in the kingdom of Judah and Israel.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, in these verses, that three several judgments were averted or lessened by the intercession of the Prophet, through the goodness and long suffering of God. The first a plague of locusts ; the second a judgment of fire ; the third a total overthrow of Israel.

Ver. 10 to the end. These verses contain a circumstance which belongs to the history of Jeroboam ; it seems that an idolatrous priest accused Amos of having conspired against the king, and would have driven him from the land of Israel.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 11. In this chapter the approaching ruin of the kingdom of Israel is represented under the vision of a basket of summer fruit. Observe the sins for which the Israelites were reproved by the Prophet, were not loving the sabbath, making use of false weights and measures, and engrossing corn in time of scarcity. It is remarkable that God swears by himself such sins shall not go unpunished.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe, that a spiritual famine is here threatened, meaning that the people should be deprived of the blessing of hearing the word of the LORD, which ought to be esteemed amongst the most precious advantages a nation can enjoy, and those who have it should make a good use of the blessing, lest God, for their punishment, should deprive them of it. A spiritual famine is far worse than a famine of the fruits of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe, that after the dreadful threatenings in this chapter great and comfortable promises succeed, of restoration and prosperity to the Jews, together with the Gentile world in the kingdom of the Messiah. The words of the prophecy, so full of majesty, should inspire us with fear and reverence of God who is every where, whose power has no bounds, and from whose vengeance nothing can screen the wicked.

OBADIAH.

THIS Prophet is thought to have lived at the same time with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as his prophecy respecting the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, agrees with their predictions concerning the same people. The Prophet foretels that God would root out the Edomites because of their pride, and particularly on account of their rejoicing at the ruin of the Jews, who they would help to destroy. The ruin of the Edomites happened as Obadiah and the other Prophets foretold, for the Chaldeans took and destroyed Edom soon after Jerusalem was taken. Thus Providence brings down proud and cruel people, severely punishes those who insult the miserable and delight in their suffering, and takes vengeance upon the enemies of the church and those who oppose his glory.

JONAH.

JONAH lived in the time of Jehoash and Jeroboam the second, kings of Israel. Jonah is the only Prophet whose writings are handed down to us that was sent to any heathen nation.

Our blessed Saviour in the Gospel confirms the truth of what is contained in this book, and proves that Jonah was really a Prophet.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 4. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, at the time Jonah was sent thither, was one of the largest and most ancient cities in the world. It was situated upon the banks of the river Tigris, and according to learned authors was in length about twenty-one miles, nine broad, and fifty round. It was surrounded with stately walls, and fortified with lofty towers, and is thought to have contained six hundred thousand persons. God sent the Prophet Jonah to the Ninevites and Assyrians, that those idolaters and enemies of the Jews, who were in a short time to be the instruments of his providence to destroy the kingdom of the ten tribes, might know that the God of Israel was the almighty God, who would overthrow their city, as it happened some time after. Jonah was afraid to discharge his mission at Nineveh, which led him to attempt to flee into another country; this was very sinful.

Ver. 4 to the end. The storm which suddenly rose, and the lot falling upon Jonah, convinced him that it was in vain to attempt to flee from the presence of the LORD God, who is in all places, and always finds out those who do wickedly; and Jonah's own conscience led him to bear witness against himself. The fish in the end proved the means of his preservation, as he would have been drowned in the sea if the fish had not swallowed him. Whether this fish was a whale, or one of those enormous sea monsters which travellers describe, is uncertain; but Jonah's situation in its belly must have been very dreadful, worse than any dungeon; and without the miraculous power of God he could not have lived in it. When the mariners arrived in their own country no doubt they gave a full account of this astonishing transaction, which would help to prepare the Ninevites for the preaching of Jonah afterwards.

CHAPTER II.

Observe, what devout thoughts passed in Jonah's mind whilst he was in the belly of the fish, and how wonderfully he was delivered. The miraculous preservation of Jonah, and his coming alive out of the fish the third day, was a type of the resurrection of our SAVIOUR, and our Lord himself refers to it as such; *see Matthew, chap. xii. ver. 40; and chap. xvi. ver. 4; also, Luke, xi. ver. 30.*

CHAPTER III.

Ver 1 to 5. Observe, that Jonah who was afraid to go the first time the LORD sent him, went without hesitation when he again received the divine command. This shows that the corrections of the Almighty are of great use to convince men of their error, to quicken their zeal, and to lead them to a more faithful discharge of their duty.

Ver. 5 to the end. The warning God gave the Ninevites of their approaching ruin shows, that though he was provoked at the abominable crimes they were guilty of, he was inclined to show mercy to them. This city continued in prosperity for a hundred and fifty years afterwards, but was at last destroyed for the wickedness of the people. God's withholding his judgments when the Ninevites humbled themselves at the preaching of Jonah, teaches us that fasting, humiliation, and repentance, are the most effectual means of averting the divine judgments, and that God forgives even the most guilty when they sincerely repent. What our LORD says of the men of Nineveh, *Matthew, chap. xii. ver. 41*, should be a warning to all Christians to follow their example of repentance, as those will most certainly be condemned at the last day who continue in their sins after being so warned in the Gospel to forsake them.

CHAPTER IV.

Jonah's displeasure at the sparing the Ninevites must be considered as one of those weaknesses which are sometimes found in persons of the greatest piety. He was afraid of being thought a false prophet, because his prediction was not fulfilled.

filled. By causing the gourd to grow, God gave a proof of his compassion and tenderness towards Jonah, who certainly was in a very critical situation, in a strange country where he might probably have been ill used as a false Prophet; and it pleased the LORD to make the same gourd a means of instruction to him. From the LORD's own words, we learn that he hates none of his creatures, and so far from desiring to make them miserable, and taking pleasure in their sufferings, he is always inclined to spare them and do them good. This consideration ought to affect us with love and gratitude towards our all merciful Creator, and engage us to be merciful towards our fellow creatures, that we may be the *children of our FATHER which is in heaven.*

MICAH.

THE Prophet Micah lived at the same time with Isaiah and Hosea.

CHAPTER I.

The predictions in this chapter related to the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. This Prophet also foretold the ruin of several cities in the land of Israel and Judah: these predictions were all fulfilled. Observe, *ver. 3 to 5*, the sublime description of the Lord coming to execute his judgments against a guilty nation.

CHAPTER II.

Observe the woe denounced in the beginning of this chapter against those that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds; or who, when they ought to be making their peace with God, and rooting out all evil thoughts from their mind before they compose themselves to sleep, fill up the hours of darkness with wicked devices; such persons bring the curse of the Lord upon themselves and their families.

CHAPTER III.

The curses denounced in this chapter show that the depravity of the Jews was general, and past remedy, in the time of the Prophet Micah.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe, in these verses, a remarkable prophecy which intimates that all nations shall be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and shall come and worship and serve him. This has been partly accomplished, by the conversion of many Gentile nations to Christianity, but it will not receive its full accomplishment till the religion of CHRIST prevails throughout the world.

Ver. 8 to the end. The prophecy in these verses showed that the Jews should be carried into captivity at Babylon, but that they should return and dwell in Judea, and that all their enemies should be confounded.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 5. These verses relate to the MESSIAH, and foretold that he would be born in the city of Bethlehem. The 2d chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and the 2d chapter of St. Luke's, show the fulfilment of this prophecy.

Ver. 5 to the end. These verses foretold that God would raise up kings to deliver and protect his people Israel, and to put an end to the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, which was also fulfilled.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 6. These verses show that God is perfectly just, and at the same time full of goodness towards men, that he only seeks to make them happy, and that he leads them with favours to engage them to love and fear him.

Ver. 6 to the end. By these verses God teaches us, that the only worship he approves is that which is attended with uprightness and innocence of life, with charity and humility of heart, and that those who make use of false weights and measures, and rob their neighbour either by violence, fraud, or deceit, are odious in his sight, and will certainly bring his curse and heavy punishments upon themselves.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.

Observe, in this chapter, the dreadful wickedness of the nation which was so great that a good man was as hard to be met with as a good fig out of its season; and sincere people were so scarce that the nearest relations could not be safely trusted. Observe, in these verses, the way of God's dealings with men, and especially with his church; when they sin against him he chastens them, but does not forsake them, nor suffers their enemies to prevail against them. This goodness of the LORD should stir us up to acknowledge his mercy and power, as the Prophet does in the 18th verse.

NAHUM.

NAHUM is supposed to have lived in the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah, and about ninety years after the Prophet Jonah; his prophecy relates almost wholly to the destruction of Nineveh.

CHAPTER I.

It appears from this chapter, that the Ninevites did not continue long after the preaching of Jonah to bring forth the fruits of repentance, but returned to their former courses, and oppressed the Jews. Nahum was therefore inspired to foretel the destruction of Nineveh and the whole Assyrian monarchy, but it does not appear that he was sent to the Ninevites as Jonah had been. This prophecy was made at the time when the Assyrians were a very powerful people; and it was completely fulfilled about sixty years afterwards, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed Nineveh, and put an end to the Assyrian empire. We should particularly take notice of what this Prophet says concerning the infinite power and justice of God, and his goodness to those who trust in him.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have a description, written eighty years before, of what afterwards befel the Assyrians and the city of Nineveh. This ancient, powerful, and opulent city, was taken by the Babylonians; its houses and palaces destroyed, its inhabitants became a prey to the conquerors, and the Assyrian monarchy came to an end. So considerable an event should serve to convince us more and more, that the predictions of the Prophets came from God; that there is a Providence which rules all things with justice and wisdom, and with a power which nothing can resist; and that the same God who thus punishes and abases kingdoms and nations is the judge of all men, and will render to every one according to his works. By *lions*, and *young lions*, *ver. 11*, &c. was meant the king and royal family.

CHAPTER III.

The Prophet in this chapter goes on denouncing a woe against Nineveh for her perfidy and violence, and for her idolatry, which he compares to the destruction of No, a famous city in Egypt. When Nahum uttered this prophecy, Nineveh was the capital of the greatest empire in the world; *see the remarks on the first chapter of Jonah*: but no traces of it remain at this day, and its situation is hardly known. The destruction of Nineveh is a striking proof of the almighty power of God, and shows that when he pleases, he overturns the greatest states and kingdoms. It was for their pride, luxury, injustice, and idolatry, and for their ill treatment of God's people that He destroyed them, and thus it will always be, God will ever humble the proud and punish them who live in wickedness and impiety, especially if after promising repentance and amendment of life they return to their sins.

HABAKKUK.

As Nahum prophesied the destruction of the Assyrians who carried the ten tribes into captivity, so Habakkuk foretold the destruction of the Chaldeans who completed the captivity of the two tribes that remained. This Prophet is supposed to have lived at the same time with Jeremiah.

CHAPTER I.

This chapter shows that the corruption of the Jews was come to the height. Observe, that the Prophet foretold that God would bring the Chaldeans upon them, and describes the character of that people.

CHAPTER II.

Observe, that the Prophet having prayed in the foregoing chapter for the Jews, God answers in this, and assures him, that although the deliverance of his people, and the punishment of the Babylonians, were delayed for a while, yet both of them should certainly come to pass, and that he would make the Babylonians know that it was in vain they trusted in their false gods. Observe the woes denounced in *ver.* 9, 12, 15: these curses do not less regard private persons than kings. They threaten all those who heap up riches by wicked ways, and daily experience shows that ill-gotten goods are not long enjoyed, and that they commonly bring upon the unjust and their families all kind of miseries.

CHAPTER III.

The design of the hymn was to comfort the Jews, and give them full assurance that God would not forsake them, but would again display his power in delivering them from the oppression of the Chaldeans; and the use we ought to make of it is, to learn to meditate on the mercies of God, and chiefly to reflect on the wonders he has wrought for us in redeeming us by JESUS CHRIST, since these are infinitely greater mercies than those which Habakkuk celebrates in this chapter. Observe the three last verses, in which the Prophet expresses his strong confidence in the goodness of the LORD.

ZEPHANIAH.

ZEPHANIAH.

ZEPHANIAH prophesied much about the time that **Jeremiah** entered on his prophetic office. His prophecy is directed to the people of Judah.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, by what sins the king and the whole kingdom of Judah provoked the **LORD**. Observe also, the horror of the desolation which the Prophet foretold would be brought upon them for these crimes, and that neither their riches nor strength would deliver them.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter foretold that **GOD** would save a remnant of his people ; that he would cause the Jews to dwell again in the land of Canaan ; that the neighbouring nations, the Philistines, Moabites, Amorites, and the Ethiopians, should be rooted out ; and the Assyrians also who were at that time very powerful. Observe the first three verses of this chapter which teach us, that when **GOD** appears to be provoked the surest way to prevent the effects of his wrath is speedily to repent and turn to him ; that the piety, zeal, and uprightness of those who fear **GOD** are sometimes the means of turning away his anger, and that the **LORD** never fails to remember the righteous when he punishes the wicked.

CHAPTER III.

Observe, that the Prophet in the beginning of this chapter denounces the utmost woes against Jerusalem because the people had not hearkened to the voice of the **LORD**. In the conclusion he gives great promises of future favour and prosperity, all which was fully accomplished.

HAGGAI.

HAGGAI, the first of those three prophets who were sent to the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, lived about five hundred and twenty years before the birth of our Saviour. The occasion of his prophecy was the stop which was put to the building of the Temple during some years after the foundation of it had been laid.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. This verse agrees with the last verses of the 4th chapter of Ezra, and the beginning of the 5th.

Ver. 2 to the end. Haggai's reproof of the Jews for neglecting to rebuild the Temple, when they took so much pains about their own houses, should lead us to consider that it is a very great sin to be more concerned for our temporal interests and the conveniences of this life, than for the honour of God. We should also observe, that God punished the lukewarmness and negligence of the Jews by not blessing their labours, and by sending them dearth and barrenness. They who want zeal for the service of God deprive themselves of his blessing; but God blesses those who seek his kingdom and the righteousness thereof, and bestows upon them both spiritual and temporal blessings.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 20. In the third chapter of Ezra we read, that when the foundation of the Temple was laid, some old men among the Jews were greatly dispirited because it could not be rebuilt with the splendour of the former house. To revive their spirits, and to encourage the people to proceed with the work, the Prophet was inspired to tell them that the glory of the second Temple should be greater than that of the first, which was accomplished by its being honoured by the presence and preaching of the Messiah. To convince the Israelites that the hardships they had experienced for fifteen years, during their neglect of the Lord's house, were sent as a punish-

ment upon them, the Prophet was inspired to foretel, in the name of the Lord, that the seasons should from that day forward be favourable.

Ver. 20 to the end. The Prophet here foretels that God would destroy many kingdoms, and reward the zeal of Zerubbabel, governor of the Jews. Observe, that the prophecy in this chapter relating to the glory of the second Temple, plainly showed that the Messiah was to come while that Temple was standing; and as it no longer subsists, we must confess that the Messiah here prophesied of was our Lord JESUS CHRIST. The predictions of Haggai, at the end of this chapter, were also fulfilled: the Persian and Grecian monarchies which opposed the Jews were destroyed as that of the Babylonians had been; the Jews were supported in their own land, and Zerubbabel and his descendants subsisted in a glorious state for a very long time. At length our blessed LORD was born of the posterity of Zerubbabel; *see Matthew, chap. i. ver. 13.* Thus have the predictions of the Prophets always been fulfilled, and the promises of God never failed of being accomplished. After this chapter read *Ezra, chap. 5.*

ZECHARIAH.

ZECHARIAH prophesied at the same time and upon the same occasion as Haggai.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe how the Prophet exhorted the people to repentance.

Ver. 7 to the end. The first of the prophetic visions in this chapter, *ver. 8*, signified that God would have compassion on Jerusalem; that he would restore the Jews and watch over them for their good; the other, *ver. 18*, signified that God would defeat the designs and endeavours of the enemies of his people, and would bring down the power of the kingdoms and nations which had set themselves against them.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 6. The vision in these verses signified that Jerusalem should have great increase and prosperity, which was fulfilled.

Ver. 6 to the end. GOD here promises to be present with his church, and to multiply her members. This has been in a great measure fulfilled by the great numbers that were converted to the Jewish religion after the captivity, and still more by the conversion of numbers to Christianity, but it will have a further accomplishment.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 8. We read in the *Book of Ezra, chap. 5*, that while the Jews were rebuilding the Temple their adversaries endeavoured to stop the work. This vision was designed to give the strongest encouragement to the Jews to believe that GOD, after plucking them as brands out of the fire, or delivering them out of captivity, would not give them up, but would still continue to favour them; and that in spite of their enemies, with Satan at the head of them, the Temple should be finished, and the high priest, clothed in his sacred garments, should officiate in the Holy of holies.

Ver. 8 to the end. These verses relate to a great future deliverance and restoration. The *Branch* signified the *Messiah*.

CHAPTER IV.

The *golden candlestick* meant the Jewish state; the *oil* the spirit of GOD; the *two anointed ones* Joshua and Zerubabel. But they are supposed to relate to spiritual things also.

CHAPTER V.

The vision of the flying roll represented the divine vengeance. Observe, for what crimes it was threatened to the Jews, and regard this chapter as an awful admonition that a multitude of curses, particularly dispersion and captivity, are the allotted punishment for national guilt and depravity.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 9. This vision seems to denote that as there had happened, so there would still happen, great changes in the empire of the world, and particularly in the four monarchies which Daniel and the other Prophets had spoken of; and that amidst all those changes Providence would preserve the Jews, and execute judgments on their enemies.

Ver. 9 to the end. This vision related first to the establishment of the Jews at that time, but in a fuller sense to the Messiah and his spiritual kingdom.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 8. The fasts referred to in this chapter, were those which the Jews kept during the seventy years captivity.

Ver. 8 to the end. This admonition should be observed by Christians, and it affords great comfort to the widow and fatherless, the stranger and the poor, by showing that God is their sure friend, and will severely punish those who afflict and oppress them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 16. GOD here promised the continuance of his favour to those who were returned from the captivity, so they should have cause for rejoicings, and therefore they might discontinue their fasts; but he strictly enjoins them to be true and just in all their dealings, to bear no malice or hatred in their hearts, and to avoid the sin of perjury, or bearing false witness against their neighbours.

Ver. 16 to the end. These verses signified that several nations would one day join with the Jews in worshipping the true GOD, which came to pass after the captivity when many idolaters were converted; and it was further accomplished when many heathens were converted to the Christian religion, but is not yet fully completed.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 9. The Prophet here foretels that the Tyrians, Syrians, Sidonians, Philistines, and the other enemies of his people

people should be destroyed; which came to pass, as we learn from Josephus, a Jewish historian, and from the history of the Maccabees in the Apocrypha.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe, that these verses contain a very remarkable prophecy which was fulfilled when our blessed SAVIOUR made his royal entry into Jerusalem, riding upon the foal of an ass; see *Matthew, chap. xxi. ver. 5, &c. John, chap. xii. ver. 15.*

Ver. 12 to the end. These verses promised great victories to God's people, and the prophecies contained in them related both to temporal and spiritual blessings.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter should lead us to consider that God is the author of all blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, that from him alone we ought to expect them; and that in order to obtain them we must devoutly ask, and diligently serve him.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter describes in general the judgments of God on his people Israel, and intimates that God would cast them off, and scatter them over all the world. *Ver. 12, 13,* show that this prophecy relate to our Saviour. The prediction concerning *the thirty pieces of silver, and the potter's field,* was fulfilled when Judas betrayed our Lord, and afterwards carried back the money; see *Matthew, chap. xxvii. ver. 7.*

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 9. These verses related to an invasion that was to be made upon the Jews sometime after their settlement in their own land, and it also describes the interposition of God in their favour.

Ver. 9 to the end. These verses describe the spiritual mercies of God in converting his people, and give a very affecting account of the deep sorrow which the Jews will feel when they shall be brought to a sense of their sins in crucifying the Messiah.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. These verses foretold the conversion of the Jews from idolatry, and they also relate to the time of the future restoration of this people.

Ver. 7 to the end. These verses relate to our Saviour, and to the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. Observe, in particular, *ver. 6, 7, and see Matthew, chap. xxvi. ver. 31. Mark, xiv. ver. 27.*

CHAPTER XIV.

The prophecy in this chapter must be understood in a spiritual sense, as relating to the Christian church, of which our Lord JESUS CHRIST is the king and protector, and in which all nations will be gathered together to worship God in spirit and in truth. The beginning of it was fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans after our Saviour's ascension, and the calamities which followed; and there will no doubt be a fulfilment of the rest of the prophecy in the latter times.

MALACHI.

MALACHI, the last of the Prophets of the Old Testament, lived some time after the rebuilding of the Temple and city, probably about the latter end of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah.

CHAPTER I.

We should learn from the Lord's reproaching the Jews for offering impure offerings, that those who return the divine love only with disobedience are guilty of foul ingratitude; and that it is in vain to call God our FATHER, and our LORD, if we do not render him the fear and honour which are due to him. The pure offering foretold, *ver. 11*, meant the Christian worship, which should be offered with sincerity and truth.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter God reproves the negligence and impiety of the priests, and threatens them with curses; and complains that the Jews had married idolatrous women contrary to the law, and that they violated the sacred laws of marriage by divorces, and by unlawful marriages; from which we learn that God is offended when the marriage law is violated. The Prophet Malachi shows that all these disorders are contrary to the first institution of marriage, for God created but one man and one woman at the beginning; and this point our LORD JESUS CHRIST settled still more plainly in the Gospel; *see Matthew, chap. xix.*

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. Our Lord himself has taught us how to apply this prophecy; *see Matthew, chap. xi. ver. 10.* Compare it also with the beginning of the *first chapter of St. Luke, and the latter end of it from ver. 67,* by which you will find that the messenger, who was to go before the Lord, was John the Baptist; and the LORD himself, our blessed Saviour, JESUS CHRIST. No Temple remains now, which shows that the Temple he was to go to must have been that which was standing when the prophecy was written.

Ver. 2 to 8. These verses show that the design of the Lord's coming would be to purify his church.

Ver. 8 to the end. Malachi's reproach of the Jews for their sins, and particularly for their contempt of the divine service, shows that God would have men respect every thing that belongs to religion, and in particular, that it is a great sin to apply to any other purpose things that are devoted to holy uses. Let us learn to detest such speeches as the Jews made, *ver. 13, &c.* and above all, to abhor the impiety of those who affirm that it is *in vain to keep God's commandments.* Observe, the LORD expressly declares he knows those that fear him, and reverence his name, that he will remember them and their pious behaviour, and will always make a great difference betwixt the righteous and the wicked.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. This verse foretold what befel the unbelieving Jews soon after the coming of JESUS CHRIST, when they were destroyed with their city and temple; but it will have a further accomplishment at the day of judgment.

Ver. 2 to 5. These verses relate to the manifestation of the Messiah, who is here called the *Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings*, on account of his bringing the light of salvation, and curing diseases both of body and mind.

Ver. 5 to the end. The Elijah here foretold was John the Baptist, who, according to the explanation given by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, the father of John, was to go before our blessed Saviour, as his forerunner, to *prepare the way of the LORD, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*; and our Saviour himself said, that John *was the Elijah who was for to come*; see *Luke, chap. i. ver. 17*; and *Matthew, chap. xi. ver. 14*. These several predictions are so many proofs of the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures; the truth of the Christian religion; the certainty of the promises and threatenings of the Gospel; and the necessity of preaching all which it commands.

With the Prophet Malachi prophecy ceased under the old law. There were no more prophets between him and John the Baptist.

Having gone through these books, consider how wonderful it was that the holy men who wrote them should foretel so many things which were to happen in distant ages, and that many of their predictions have been exactly fulfilled; which makes it certain that what they foretold which has not been accomplished, will in its proper time come to pass.

Make the prophetic books your frequent study, not with a view to find out what is difficult, but to observe what is plain and obvious; and remember that all things are known to GOD from the beginning to the end; that he rules over all the kingdoms of the earth, and that there is no GOD but the LORD JEHOVAH.

THE END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

APOCRYPHA.

THE books which are admitted into our Bible under the description of *Apocryphal books*, are so called from a Greek word, which signifies that they are of *uncertain or concealed original*. They have no title to be considered as inspired writings, nor should they be ranked with *canonical books*, because their authority has never been established; therefore, we are not to look upon them as oracles of faith, but merely as books valuable for their antiquity, and for the excellent precepts and examples they afford; and entitled to respect as written by persons well acquainted with the sacred writings.

THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS.

THE author of this book is uncertain. The name of Esdras is of the same signification as Ezra; but there is no reason to think the book was written by Ezra the scribe. It appears to be partly taken from the 35th and 36th chapters of the *Second Book of Chronicles*, and from the *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. The story of the three competitors for the favour of Darius, in the *third and fourth chapters*, is supposed to be fabulous, and could not concern Zerubbabel because he was at that time in Jerusalem. The fine encomium on truth in *chap. iv. ver. 34 to 42*, is the only part of this book which is particularly worthy of the attention of Christians.

THE SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS.

THIS Book is not supposed to have been written by the same writer as the former, though it bears the same name; neither is it believed to be the work of Ezra the scribe. The Book
contains

contains much sublime instruction; but the prophecies and visions in it are not believed to have been real, but imaginary ones, written as poems frequently are at this time, taking former truths for a foundation, and building ingenious fictions upon them. Learned authors give very strong reasons for thinking that the *Second Book of Esdras* was written after the preaching of the Gospel and the destruction of Jerusalem. In reading the account of visions and prophecies we must be careful to take up no opinions that are not confirmed by the New Testament. It is very plain from several chapters, that the author of the Book of Esdras, whoever he was, believed in the SON OF GOD; that he was acquainted with the historical books of the Old Testament, and believed what they related; and that he also believed the MESSIAH would come to raise the dead and judge mankind, and that the next world would be everlasting. The greatest part of the Book relates to the state of the Jews towards the end of their captivity, and the beginning of their restoration to their own land.

TOBIT.

THIS Book is much esteemed for its antiquity and its contents. The writer gives an history of himself and of his son, the truth of which there is no reason to question. Tobit is to be considered as a real character: he was born, probably, during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. By Tobit's account of himself in the first and second chapter, he seems to have been a very just and upright man, and very stedfast in his worship of the true GOD. What is related in the following chapters concerning the angel and the evil spirit is very wonderful; but we must remember that these things happened under the Mosaic dispensation, at a time when particular persons were frequently favoured with familiar intercourse with angels, and when evil spirits had more liberty than they have had since our Saviour came upon earth. Tobit's advice to his son in the 4th chapter, is excellent, and in some particulars it agrees with the divine discourses of our Saviour,

Saviour, and the exhortation of the Apostles. The thanksgiving in *chap. 13* is also admirable. In the *14th chapter* Tobit does not pretend to prophecy himself, but he reminds his son of what had been foretold by the Prophets, and declares his own firm belief that their prediction would be fulfilled. Tobias testified his faith in the same prophecies by obeying his father's injunctions, and he lived to see the accomplishment of some of them.

Some of the chapters of this Book are appointed in our Liturgy to be read as *proper lessons for week days*. See the *Calendar, with the Table of Lessons for October*, in the Common Prayer Book.

JUDITH.

THE time at which this book was written, and who was its author, are uncertain; but the circumstances described in it must have occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, because the Persians are represented as still subject to the Assyrian empire. It presents a very interesting scene of ambition frustrated, and of intemperance punished. Judith's prayer and hymn are composed with much piety, and she proved herself to be a true Israelite full of faith and confidence in the favour and mercy of God, which alone could carry her through such a dangerous enterprize. Some of the chapters in the Book of Judith are read as proper lessons; see the *Calendar for October* in the Common Prayer Book.

The rest of the Chapters of the BOOK OF ESTHER, which are not found either in the Hebrew or the Chaldee.

THESE chapters are in a different style from the Book of Esther, which is among the books of Scripture, and are supposed to be the invention of some other writer, or writers, to decorate and embellish the history.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

THOUGH this book is stiled the Wisdom of Solomon, it is not allowed by the learned to have been written by that king, but it has always been esteemed as *a treasure of wisdom*, and on account of its antiquity, and the importance of its contents, it has been and still is in high esteem; and it was evidently the production of a pious and enlightened author, of one who by reading the Scriptures had made the style of them familiar to him, and learnt to imitate the language of divine inspiration. This book deserves to be read with great attention, for Christians may derive much instruction and improvement from it. Some of the *lessons for holidays* are taken from the Book of Wisdom; see the *table of proper lessons for holidays* in the Common Prayer Book, also the Calendar for October.

ECCLESIASTICUS.

THIS book has sometimes been considered as the production of Solomon, from its resemblance to the inspired works of that king, but the preface to the book tells us it was written by JESUS THE SON OF SIRACH. It contains much excellent instruction, and is very valuable for the familiar lessons it affords for the direction of manners in every condition and circumstance. The Book furnishes also an instructive detail of the opinion that prevailed in the time of the author, and it shows the impatience of the Jews for the appearance of the promised Messiah, and the firm confidence in the hope of a future life and judgment, which had been built upon the assurance of the law and the Prophets. It serves likewise to prove, that as the Gospel dispensation approached, the Jews were prepared for its reception, by being more enlightened, to understand the spiritual import and figurative character of the law. This book deserves to be studied with great attention by Christians. Many lessons for the church service are taken from it, as may be seen by the *table of lessons for holidays*, and by the Calendar for October in the Common Prayer Book.

BARUCH.

THIS book is said to be written by Baruch, who was the friend of the Prophet Jeremiah, and it will be found in many particulars to agree with the writings of that Prophet, and the history of the Jews by the inspired writers.

THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN.

THIS book contains only a song or hymn in praise of God, said to have been uttered by the three companions of Daniel when they were cast into the fiery furnace for not worshipping the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king set up, and it is greatly to be admired for the good instruction it contains. The sentiments it expresses are quite suitable to persons in such a situation as the Holy Children were; it greatly resembles the 148th Psalm, and being suitable to Christian worship it makes a part of the Common Prayer-Book, and was formerly sung during Lent, instead of the *Te Deum*.

THE HISTORY OF SUSANNAH.

THE author of this book is uncertain; the design of it is to show the confidence of truth and security of innocence, and it exhibits in striking colours the loveliness of chastity, and the hideousness of licentiousness.

THE HISTORY OF BEL AND THE DRAGON.

THIS history is considered as a fable intended to open the eyes of the Jewish people to the folly of worshipping the idols of the Babylonians, into which they had been seduced,

THE PRAYER OF MANASSES KING OF JUDAH.

WHETHER this be actually the prayer which Manasses is said, in the *second Book of Chronicles*, chapter 33, to have made in his captivity is uncertain; but the sentiments and expressions of it are very suitable to a person under such unhappy circumstances, and it is very agreeable to the doctrines of Christianity.

FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES.

THIS book, and that which follows it, are so named because they contain the history of Judas Maccabeus and his brethren. The first Book of the Maccabees affords a lively picture of a nation with pious leaders at their head, struggling with zeal for religious liberty, and endeavouring by means suggested by piety and steady fortitude, to regain the favour and protection of God. It also describes the gradual recovery of Judea from desolation and misery to importance and prosperity, and at the same time the worship of the true God restored, and idolatry put a stop to. The particulars recorded in this book shew the accomplishment of many of the prophecies.

After the death of Artaxerxes (who is called in Scripture Ahasuerus) several kings reigned in succession over the empire of Persia, whose characters answered in a most wonderful manner to the prophecies of Daniel. The last of them was named Darius Codomannus, who was a very valiant, mild, and gentle prince; but idolatry and wickedness were carried to a dreadful height in his dominions: therefore, Alexander, afterwards called the Great, king of Macedon, in Greece, was employed by the Lord as his instrument for putting an end to the empire of the Medes and Persians, and setting up the Grecian empire. Alexander gained great victories over the Medes and Persians. Darius defended his kingdom to the utmost of his power, but was at length seized by two of his generals and bound with chains of gold, and afterwards mortally wounded by them, and left in a
covered

covered chariot where he expired before the arrival of Alexander, who lamented his unhappy fate, bestowed an honourable funeral upon him, and treated his family with the utmost kindness. The death of Darius Codomannus put an end to the Persian empire after it had continued two hundred and nineteen years from the beginning of the reign of Cyrus. Whilst he was engaged in his contest with the Persians, Alexander conquered Tyre and fulfilled the prophecies that had been denounced against this famous place. When this great conqueror had secured to himself the Persian empire he resolved on the conquest of other nations, and had great successes; he then took up his residence in Babylon where he employed his thoughts for the embellishment of the city, and in contriving future conquests; but he died before he could put his plans in execution. The Almighty overruled his actions, that the prophecies against Babylon written three hundred years before might be accomplished. Alexander intended to repair the Temple of the Idol, called Belus, but God had ordained that it should never be rebuilt. The Jews who were among Alexander's army would not help to clear away the rubbish, though they were punished for refusing; but at length the king, admiring their constancy, discharged them and set them free.

What is here related concerning the conquests of Alexander is taken from the writings of Jewish and heathen authors, and it shows how exactly the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as interpreted by Daniel, was fulfilled by the Grecian empire succeeding to the Persians. In this dream the belly of brass, and the legs of iron, were emblems of Alexander and his successors. This relation also explains Daniel's vision, in which Alexander himself was typified under the image of *a leopard with four wings*, and that of *a he goat running with so much swiftness* as not to touch the earth, and attacking a ram with horns and trampling him under his feet. The ram was Darius Codomannus.

Whilst Alexander continued in Babylon, he gave himself up to great excesses, and at length by immoderate drinking he brought on a violent fever which put an end to his life at the age of thirty-two years and eight months. Alexander did not name his successor, because his children were all too young to assert

assert their claim to the throne, and he had no friend upon whom he could depend as their guardian ; he therefore, in his life time, gave the government of different provinces to his principal commanders. This filled them with ambitious views, and made them, when their great leader was removed, desirous of sovereign power. After Alexander's death Babylon gradually fell into decay, till in process of time the predictions of the Prophet concerning it were exactly fulfilled, and the place where it stood is so completely covered with pools of water, or occupied by wild beasts and serpents, that travellers say no human being dare go near it ; and thus we may be certain it will always remain, for the Almighty has doomed it never to be inhabited. What a warning does the fate of Babylon afford to wicked nations !

Alexander's chiefs soon began to form confederacies, and to make war upon one another, till at length they were all destroyed, except Cassander, Lyfimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. These were the four horns of the goat which, according to Daniel's vision, were to arise after the breaking of the first horn ; *see Daniel, chap. viii. ver. 22. chap. xi. ver. 4.* The empire of Alexander was now divided into four kingdoms, viz. Egypt, Syria, Asia, Macedon. The Jews fell under the dominion of Ptolemy, afterwards called Ptolemy Soter, who had Egypt, Arabia, Cælo Syria, and Palestine, or the Land of Israel, for his share.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 11. These verses agree with the history of Alexander, and his successors, as given by heathen authors. Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the kings of Syria. He was described by the Prophet Daniel, *chap. xi. ver. 21*, as a very vile person.

Ver. 11 to 16. Observe, in these verses, how some of the Jews provoked the anger of the LORD.

Ver. 16 to the end. It appears from these verses that Antiochus Epiphanes was a cruel persecutor of the Jews, and a very wicked man. The abomination of desolation, which is mentioned in the *54th verse*, was the same as was prophesied of by Daniel, *chap. xi. ver. 31*, who calls it the *abomination that maketh desolate*. It is supposed to have been the statue of

of Jupiter Olympius, the principal idol of the heathens. Idols, in Scripture, are called *abominations*; and the idol might be said to *make desolate*, because it put a stop to the worship of the true God, and brought destruction upon the Jews, which would not have been permitted had not many of the Jews forsaken the LORD, and joined themselves with the heathen; but there were still many faithful people among them, and God was soon pleased to raise them up a deliverer, and to maintain the honour of his own great name.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 31. Mattathias, who was of the priestly order, is generally supposed to have been a descendant of Phineas, the son of Eleazar. When the Prophet Daniel foretold the dreadful persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, he also predicted *that the people who knew God should be strong to do exploits, and that they should be holpen with little help*; see chap. xi. 32, and this was fulfilled by Mattathias and his sons.

Ver. 31 to 49. Mattathias and his friends did not consider at the first that they had no right to expect miraculous help upon the sabbath more than on any other day without a particular promise of God; but afterwards they concluded that the law did not require them to suffer themselves to be killed without resistance.

Ver. 49 to the end. From this pious exhortation of Mattathias to his sons, we may learn the true use of Scripture history. We find that this good man formed his own character by studying the examples of holy men recorded in the Bible. Well might his sons mourn for so excellent a parent!

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 27. Judas proved himself to be a son worthy of such a father as Mattathias. Observe, that he was inspired with courage after the same manner as the judges of Israel, of whom it is said that *the spirit of the LORD came upon them*.

Ver. 27 to 42. Antiochus had exhausted his treasures by foolish expences and profuse presents, by which he verified the Prophet's prediction, *that he should scatter the prey and spoil of riches*, see Daniel, xi. ver. 24.

Ver. 42 to the end. Observe, how proper the conduct of Judas was on this occasion. He animated his followers to make every exertion for their religion and their laws, and to resign themselves to the will of God.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 36. Observe, that Judas continued to act as the deliverer of his country, under the protection of the Almighty; and that before he engaged with the enemy he addressed himself to God in prayer, and when they had gained a victory he called upon his army to join in thanksgivings to the Lord of Hosts.

Ver. 36 to the end. Observe, how it grieved Judas and his friends to see the *sanctuary of the LORD* lying waste; and that their first care after the victory was to pull down the altar which the heathen had profaned, and set up a new one, and to restore to order every thing relating to the service of the Temple. Thus was the Temple worship restored exactly that day three years, on which it had been profaned by the heathen. But though the Jews had recovered the Temple, they were greatly annoyed as they went thither to worship, till they had fortified a part of Mount Sion to secure the priests and people from the frequent attacks of their enemies.

CHAPTER V.

Observe, that Judas and his army were victorious over many of the neighbouring nations who had been enemies of the Jews, some of whom had resolved to attempt the total destruction of the Jews of Galilee, but Judas vanquished them and defeated their purpose. Observe, also, that those Jews who attempted to do any thing contrary to the advice of Judas were unsuccessful, because the LORD had raised him up to be their leader.

CHAPTER VI.

In the *second Book of Maccabees*, chap. 8, 9, 10, there is a fuller account of the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes, of whose death we read in this chapter; but observe, that in his latter end his conscience reproached him, and that his soul was filled with

with remorse for the injuries he had done the Jews. He was succeeded by his son Antiochus Eupator, who after besieging Sion made peace with Israel, but overthrew the wall of Sion.

CHAPTER VII.

Observe, that Nicanor was not merely a heathen but a most impious blasphemer of the true God, and that he proudly resolved to destroy the holy Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, but that he and his great army were cut off by that of Judas, which was greatly inferior to it, which showed that the Lord defended his church and gave victory to his faithful servants. After this the land of Judea enjoyed an interval of peace.

CHAPTER VIII.

In Daniel's vision of the four beasts, *chap. vii.* the fourth beast was described as dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet, and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. By this beast was meant the Roman empire; and the account of the Romans, in this chapter, shows that this was a just representation of their power which bore down all before it. Judas Maccabees finding himself attacked by the whole force of the Syrians, and having none of the neighbouring nations to help him, thought it best to make a league with the Romans; but when they were so wonderfully supported by the Almighty, he should not have reckoned the Jewish among *weak nations*, but should manfully have stood his ground, animating his troops as on former occasions. Judas and his troops had no need to seek protection from a heathen power when the LORD OF HOSTS *was with him*, when the GOD of Jacob *was their refuge*. It is observable that whenever the Israelites cast off their confidence in GOD, and sought help from any *human power*, they were always unsuccessful, and so it proved in respect to Judas Maccabeus.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 54. The loss of courage in the Jews, and the death of Judas, may be considered as a judgment from God for their casting off their confidence in him, and seeking protection from the Romans; but Judas was upon the whole a very good man, and though it pleased God to punish him for his seeking aid from the Romans, by deserting him in the hour of danger, as he chastised Moses for *striking the rock*, we cannot doubt that God graciously rewarded Judas in a better world for his zealous services as the restorer and preserver of the divine law, and the deliverer and protector of his country. Observe, that after the death of Judas Maccabeus, Bacchides prevailed every where, and greatly afflicted the Jewish nation.

Ver. 54 to 57. Alcimus exercised the high priest's office, before the death of Judas, in a most abominable manner; see the 14th chapter of the second Book of Maccabees, and we find here that he gave orders to pull down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary. What the work of the Prophets was, mentioned *ver. 54*, is not known; but the judgment inflicted upon this impious high priest was a very awful one.

Ver. 57 to the end. Observe, that after the death of Alcimus the land of Judea had a short respite from war; in the meanwhile Jonathan, the brother of Judas, governed Israel according to the law, restored the Jewish religion, reformed every thing as far as he could, and rebuilt the walls and fortification of Sion.

CHAPTER X.

Observe, in this chapter, what splendid offers were made by contending kings for the alliance of Jonathan; he should not have suffered himself to be flattered by them. The greatest honour he could have had would have been that of being regarded as the defender of the church of God. Jonathan was of the priestly family, and as there had been a vacancy in the high priest's office for some years he, with the consent of the people, took it up himself; but it does not appear that he was chosen by the Lord, nor should he, as
high

high priest of the sanctuary, have worn a purple robe, a crown, and buckle of gold, presented by heathens; for his holy office, if he had been properly ordained to it, would have set him above all the kings and princes of the earth.

CHAPTER XI.

Observe, that amidst the revolutions which took place among the heathen kings who reigned in Syria and Egypt, Jonathan's alliance was still sought by all parties, and the Jews under his command were successful in most of the battles they fought; but Jonathan did not like Judas Maccabeus, in the beginning of his career, fight for the honour of God, but he followed the fatal example of Judas in his latter days, by making leagues with heathen nations; and we read in this chapter that it was not long before he began to experience the ill effect of this conduct, but on his praying to the Lord he was delivered.

CHAPTER XII.

Observe, that whilst the Jews had *in their hands*, as Jonathan said, *ver. 9*, the *Holy Books of Scripture to comfort them*, they should have learnt from those books to secure the favour of God, and to trust to his divine promises, as his chosen people, instead of putting themselves upon a footing with the heathen nations. However, for some time, Jonathan was prosperous; but at length his policy failed him, and he lost his liberty. Lacedemonia, mentioned *ver. 5*, was a Grecian state, very famous for its laws.

CHAPTER XIII.

Observe that, considering the peril and dangers of the times, Simon showed great courage and constancy in offering himself as the leader and avenger of the Jewish nation, during his brother's captivity, but he paid more regard to the peculiar duties of his station as leader of the Jewish armies, than to his sacred office as high priest, but he fought against heathens, and the Lord gave him success. Jonathan was very unfortunate in losing his life in so inglorious a manner, but it was the consequence of depending upon his own judgment, and upon human policy.

It was the tower of Acron which Simon took and cleansed from pollution.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe, in these verses, the high character of Simon, and the great blessings which God bestowed upon the Jewish nation under his government.

Ver. 16 to 24. Observe, that the Lacedemonians sent to renew their league with the Jews, and their ambassadors were honourably entertained. The Jewish nation ought not to have made leagues with heathen nations in this manner.

Ver. 24 to the end. It was not right in Simon to send a present of a shield of gold to the Romans, as if he and his people depended on the aid and protection of that powerful nation. Their confidence, as the chosen people of God, should have been in the arm of the Almighty.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 15. The king who sent letters from the isles of the sea to Simon, was Antiochus Sidetes, king of Syria, son of Demetrius, who was at that time prisoner to the king of the Persians; he thought it necessary for his interests to engage the friendship of Simon, and therefore made a league with the Jewish nation and granted them privileges.

Ver. 15 to 25. Observe, that these verses plainly show that Simon sent the *golden shield to Rome* as a token that the Jewish nation desired and expected in times of danger to be defended by the Romans. By doing this he inconsiderately dishonoured God who had always been, as the Psalmist expresses it, *their shield and their buckler, a tower of defence, a castle, and a mighty deliverer to his people*, whenever they sought his Almighty aid, and put their whole trust in him. The Romans however acted a very honourable part in writing to inform the neighbouring nations that they had solemnly engaged themselves to take the part of the Jewish nation, should it be attacked. Observe, *ver. 22, 23*, how many nations the Romans at that time could command.

Ver. 25 to the end. Observe, that Simon kept true to his covenant with Antiochus, but that this king having vanquished Tryphon, broke the league and invaded some part of Judea.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XVI.

It was probably on account of the leagues which Simon had made with the Romans and the Spartans, that his enemies were suffered to prevail against him ; but as his faults seem to have proceeded from want of consideration, and not from presumption, we may hope he found his punishment for them in this life, and the reward of his good deeds in a better world.

The history of the Jewish nation is not carried any further in the Apocrypha, but it was continued by Jewish writers.

SECOND BOOK OF MACCABEES.

THIS book was not written by the same author as the foregoing ; his name is not known. It consists of records, extracted from different works, but chiefly of an abridgment of the persecutions the Jews suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes, and Antiochus Eupator, kings of Syria. The book contains a history of about fifteen years, and it begins at a period somewhat earlier than the first Book of Maccabees. Though the author was not inspired, this book must be allowed to be a valuable and instructive history, which affords a very interesting description of a persecuted and afflicted people.

CHAPTERS I. II.

The two Epistles, contained in these chapters, are considered as containing many circumstances altogether fabulous. By the person called Neemiah, in these chapters, is meant Nehemiah, whose history we have among the books of the OLD TESTAMENT ; and Jeremy the Prophet was Jeremiah.

CHAPTER III.

Seleucus was king of Syria at that time. The hand of God appeared in what happened to Heliodorus, who attempted to seize the treasures ; and it is supposed that those who executed the divine wrath upon him were angels.

CHAPTER IV.

Antiochus Epiphanes, who succeeded his brother Seleucus in the kingdom of Syria, was that very cruel tyrant and persecutor of the Jews, who is spoken of in the *first Book of Maccabees*, chap. i. Observe the great wickedness of Jason in acting so base a part by his own brother, and in endeavouring to bring the Jews to follow the custom of the heathens. *Hercules*, to whom this wicked apostate is said, *ver. 19*, to have sent sacrifices, was one of the heathen idols. Observe, that wicked Jason was punished by the treachery of his own brother. It is shocking to read of the sacrilege which was committed at this time.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 5. The account here given of the signs and tokens which were seen in Jerusalem is very wonderful. Some learned persons suppose them to have been visions of angels; others think that they were nothing more than what are called northern lights, or lights in the air, which fearful superstitious people may fancy to resemble a great many different things.

Ver. 5 to 15. The suffering and death of Jason show that the wicked cannot long escape the divine vengeance. Antiochus showed himself to be a cruel tyrant in coming upon the city as he did without informing himself of the truth; and his presumption in going into the holy Temple to pollute it, showed that he acted in open defiance of the Lord God of Israel.

There is a further account of his persecution in the *first chapter of the first Book of Maccabees*.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 18. Jupiter Olympius was a chief idol with the heathens; a greater affront could not have been offered to the majesty of God than to call his Temple the Temple of Jupiter.

Bacchus was an idol worshipped by the heathens as the God of wine. His festivals were celebrated with drunken revels, and his worshippers on these occasions, both men and women,

women, ran about the streets, crowned with ivy, singing songs to the praise of Bacchus. In many of their abominable customs they are still imitated by Christians, who, when they meet together at feasts, often sing songs in praise of ‘Bacchus, God of wine,’ and in their drunken frolics imitate the mad actions of the Bacchanals and Bacchantes, as the male and female worshippers of Bacchus were called.

Nothing could be more disgraceful to the Jews than to be obliged to appear in processions with the ivy crowns among heathen worshippers who, when filled with wine, not only insulted them most cruelly, blasphemed the God of Israel and profaned his Temple, but committed horrid barbarities upon such as would not join them, some of which are related in this chapter, and are dreadful even to think of. The exhortation, in *ver. 12*, is very proper to fortify the minds of those who in any nation suffer persecution; and the history of the Jews, from beginning to end, proves the truth of the writer’s observations.

Ver. 18 to the end. It was strictly commanded by the law of God that the people of Israel should not eat swine’s flesh. Observe, that the good Eleazar resolved to sacrifice his life rather than do it, neither would he prevaricate in the matter, his friend advised, *ver. 21*, but gave excellent reasons why he ought not to do so, and at length died a martyr to the true religion, and gained for himself the glorious reward which is laid up in heaven for those who are *persecuted for righteousness sake*; see *Matthew, chap. v. ver. 10*.

CHAPTER VII.

The examples, exhibited in this chapter, of constancy and firmness under the greatest tortures show what may be endured by those who believe in a resurrection from the dead, and a life of everlasting happiness, and who resolve to obey God rather than man. These martyrs, and Eleazar, of whose death there is an account in the *6th chapter*, suffered in the time of Mattathias.

CHAPTER VIII.

In this chapter we should particularly remark the presumptuous arrogance of Nicanor, and the disappointment and disgrace he met with, as well as the courage and holy confidence of Judas Maccabeus.

CHAPTER IX.

Observe, in this chapter, the very circumstantial account of the miserable death of that cruel tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes, which agrees with the *sixth chapter of the first Book of Maccabees*.

CHAPTER X.

Observe, that this chapter agrees with the *4th and 6th chapters of the first Book of Maccabees*. Observe also, how greatly the heathens had profaned the holy city of Jerusalem, and the wonderful success of Judas and his host against the numerous armies which attacked them and invaded Judea.

CHAPTER XI.

Observe, that this chapter gives a further account of the proceedings of Lycias, in respect to the Jews, than is contained in the *first Book of the Maccabees*.

Observe, *ver. 3*, that Lycias ranked the holy Temple at Jerusalem with the Temples of the heathen idols. The *first Book of Maccabees* makes no mention of the prodigies related in this and the foregoing chapter; but it is not improbable that Judas and his little host might be encouraged by visions of angels.

CHAPTER XII.

Observe, here, that notwithstanding the covenant which the king made with the Jews some of his governors continued to persecute them, but Judas Maccabeus subdued them. Observe the prayer of this valiant leader when he discovered that the Jews, who were slain in battle, had concealed things dedicated to idols. It shows that he believed in the resurrection; but remember that the Christian religion does not allow of prayers to be offered for the dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

Observe, in this chapter, the miserable end of Menelaus, the high priest, of whose treachery and cruelty there is an account in the *fourth chapter of this Book*. Onias, the son of the good Onias, who was treacherously murdered by Antiochus,

dronicus, ought to have been high priest; but we learn from the *seventh chapter of the first Book of Maccabees*, that Alcimus was made high priest by Antiochus Eupator, king of Syria; and that Onias fled into Egypt, where he was in such favour with Ptolemy, that this king permitted him to build a Jewish Temple in Egypt like that at Jerusalem, to adorn it with the same furniture, vessels, and altars for incense, and to have himself and his family established as priests; and that they performed the same religious worship in this Temple as at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIV.

We here learn that Alcimus was refused by the Jews because he had complied with the heathen superstition; on which he made his court to the new king, Demetrius, and laid an accusation against Judas Maccabeus, on which Demetrius endeavoured to confirm him in the priesthood, by sending Bacchides against Judas, and afterwards Nicanor; see *1st Maccabees, chap. 7*. The account, at the end of the chapter, of Razis, who killed himself, is very shocking; his action was not justifiable on any principles of religion; it was self-murder.

CHAPTER XV.

Observe, in this chapter, a further account of the blasphemies of Nicanor, of which we read in the *7th chapter of the 1st Book of Maccabees*. We here learn that he intended to attack the Jews upon the *sabbath day*; that he openly defied the LORD OF HEAVEN, and set himself against his divine power. Observe also, that Judas was animated by a divine vision to hope for victory over Nicanor; his hopes, through the power and goodness of God, were crowned with success, and the wicked blasphemer punished as his crimes deserved.

Read again the remaining chapters of the *first Book of Maccabees*, in which the history of the Jews is continued.

A
HELP TO THE UNLEARNED,
&c.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE NEW TESTAMENT signifies the New Covenant. The OLD TESTAMENT contains the covenant which GOD made with the Israelites as his chosen people, according to his promise to Abraham that he would make of him a great nation, which promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob. These divine promises were accomplished: God made of their seed a great nation, took them into covenant with himself, as his peculiar people under the mediation of Moses, and fulfilled all that he promised and threatened under that covenant. But this covenant was not intended to last for ever; it was to give way to a new covenant as appears from many of the prophecies; see in particular *Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. ver. 31 to 34*, which shows plainly that the *New Covenant* was to be of a spiritual nature, not written like the *law of Moses on tables of stone*, but *upon the hearts of the faithful people of GOD*; and that GOD would, under this covenant, grant remission of sins, and maintain a spiritual intercourse with his people. The NEW TESTAMENT relates entirely to this covenant: it contains the *four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. The GOSPELS contain the history of the life and miracles of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and his doctrines. The writers of the Gospels are called *Evangelists*. Their names were *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. *Matthew and John* were constant companions of our Lord during his ministry. The evangelists

evangelists are called *saints*, or holy persons, on account of their holy office. The writings of the evangelists are called the Gospels, because they contain *the Gospel*, or *good tidings of salvation to mankind through a REDEEMER*. The Gospel also conveys GOD's gracious promises of the *gift of the HOLY GHOST* to all who repent of their sins and believe in the REDEEMER, and of everlasting life and happiness in heaven to such as follow their Saviour's blessed example. In the history of our LORD, recorded by the evangelists, we are particularly to remark the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning him in the Old Testament; also, the prophecies of our LORD himself, and of John the Baptist.

There is no doubt but that all the writers of the New Testament, as well as those of the Old Testament, wrote by the inspiration of the HOLY SPIRIT, for they reveal things which the wisest men could not have discovered.

The *four Gospels* are not exactly alike, for each of the *evangelists* relates some particulars of our Lord's life, miracles, and discourses, with which the others might not be acquainted; neither do any of them relate things in the exact order of time in which they happened, but they all agree in the great truths upon which the salvation and eternal happiness of mankind depend. They all point out the certain way for sinners to obtain forgiveness and the favour of GOD. They all exhibit, in the history of our BLESSED REDEEMER, a pattern of every virtue in the highest perfection. As the NEW TESTAMENT contains such important instruction we should study it with the most serious attention, beseeching GOD of his infinite goodness to give us grace to understand what he has been graciously pleased to reveal through CHRIST, and incline our hearts to follow the blessed example, and obey the divine precepts of our LORD and SAVIOUR, who took our nature upon him in order to fulfil the will of GOD, and who willingly laid down his life to redeem mankind from everlasting death.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW.

ST. MATTHEW, one of the four evangelists, was a publican; one of those people who gathered the taxes which the Roman emperors exacted from the Jewish nation. The publicans
were

were greatly despised by their countrymen in general for submitting to this employment. There is an account of our Saviour's calling Matthew to be one of his apostles in the *9th chapter* of his own Gospel, the *2d of St. Mark*, and the *5th of St. Luke*; he is sometimes called Levi. St. Matthew's Gospel is supposed to have been written about eight years after our LORD's ascension.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe, that these verses contain the genealogy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and show us that as MAN he was by descent the son of Abraham, and that he was also the son of David. It was foretold to Abraham that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*; see *Genesis, chap. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18.* There has never been upon earth any one who brought *blessings to all mankind* but our LORD JESUS CHRIST; he was therefore the promised seed of Abraham. Observe also, that the evangelist traces our Saviour's descent, in a regular line, from King David to Joseph, the husband of Mary. There is another genealogy of our Saviour in the *third chapter of St. Luke's Gospel*, which traces the generations of his descent from Joseph up to Adam.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that what the angel revealed to Joseph concerning the child his wife was to bear, perfectly satisfied all his scruples; and it fully explained an ancient prophecy, which till then had been very obscure; see this prophecy in *Isaiah, chap. 7, ver. 14.* The name *Emmanuel*, which signifies *God with us*, intimated that the son of the Virgin Mary should have a *divine* as well as *human nature*, that he would be both GOD and MAN. The name JESUS, is the same as Joshua, and signifies a *Saviour*. Joshua, the leader of the children of Israel, saved the people from their enemies, and conducted them to Canaan; but JESUS, *the Saviour of the world*, was to save his people from their sins, and conduct them to heaven. Joseph's divine dream agreed with what the angel revealed to the Virgin Mary, as related in the *first chapter of St. Luke*. Observe, that Joseph gave a strong proof of his faith in taking Mary home to his house; and we should follow his example in believing what is here recorded by the Evangelists concerning our Saviour's being *conceived by the HOLY GHOST*.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 13. It was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah that the Messiah should be *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the glory of his people Israel*; see *Isaiah, chap. xlii. ver. 6. chap. xlix. ver. 6. chap. lx. ver. 5.*; and it pleased God to give notice of his birth when it happened both to Jews and Gentiles. Observe here, how it was first made known to the Gentiles. The *second chapter of St. Luke* shows how it was first made known to the Jews. The Herod here mentioned, was Herod the Great. He was not of the family of David, but was made king of Judea by the Roman emperor, to whom he paid tribute. Herod was a very wicked man; he put to death his own mother, and his wife Mariamne; was very arbitrary and cruel in his government, put what persons he pleased into the priesthood, and turned them out at pleasure. He also made great changes in the laws, customs, and religion of the Jews, and introduced spectacles of wrestlers, combats between wild beasts and criminals, in conformity to the heathens, pretending it was all necessary to please Cæsar. Thinking it needful for his defence, as well as for his grandeur and glory, he built several strong places and towers within and without Jerusalem. He raised Temples in several cities and dedicated them to Cæsar, who was greatly his friend; and in order to please the Jews, and perpetuate his own name, he rebuilt with great magnificence the Temple at Jerusalem, which having stood near 510 years, was in a very ruinous condition. It is called the *second Temple*, not the *third*, because it was built only by way of reparation, it not having been razed or demolished with a ruinous design, nor did it lie in ashes and desolation as when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it.

Ver. 11 to 12. The wise men were Gentiles, (that is heathens) of very high rank, as is supposed. They are thought to have come from the same country as the queen of Sheba. From Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, *chap. ix. ver. 24, &c.* those pious Jews, who read and believed the prophecies, expected that the Messiah would appear in the world about the time that CHRIST was born; and there was among the Gentiles also an expectation that

that about this time a great prince would arise among the Jews. The prophecy which foretold that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, is in the *fifth chapter of Micah, ver. 2.* How this was fulfilled we read in the *first chapter of St. Luke.* Herod knew that he *was not born king of the Jews*, and of course he could not be the person the wise men came in search of. Observe, that he immediately formed a deep design to destroy the new born king for fear he should be set up in his stead. Take particular notice that when the wise men entered the house of the Virgin Mary, they bowed down before the holy infant as to a king, though he was in appearance the child of a woman of mean condition. The gifts they offered were such as were usually presented to kings, and they must have been very acceptable to the Virgin Mary and Joseph, as they furnished them with the means to bear the expence of a journey into Egypt, and to subsist in a foreign country. When the wise men returned back to their own country, they without doubt reported what they had seen and heard, which prepared the way for the reception of the Gospel afterwards.

Ver. 13 to the end. The order which Herod gave for destroying all the children of Bethlehem who were under two years old, shows with what view he desired the wise men to bring him word when they had found the young child. Observe, that God knew what was in the wicked heart of Herod, and defeated his purposes by removing JESUS out of his jurisdiction, and that Joseph, in all things, obeyed the commands of God respecting the holy infant, which showed that he believed what had been revealed to him.

Very soon after the departure of JESUS into Egypt Herod died a most miserable death. One of his sons, named Antipater, whom he had designed for his successor, longing for the crown, conspired against his father to poison him: being convicted of this, Antipater was condemned and executed with Herod's approbation: and this was the third son he had put to death. Five days after this, and in the seventieth year of his age, Herod himself died of a dreadful complication of disorders. He had a slow fever, an asthma, an ulcer in his bowels, which bred worms, and lice. He languished in extreme pain and torment till he expired; and he appears to have been

been smitten of God in a signal and dreadful manner for his cruelties and the multiplied iniquities of his whole life.

Archelaus, who was one of Herod's sons, did not continue long in his government, for having committed many acts of cruelty he was deposed by the Roman Emperor, and banished to a town in France, after he had reigned in Judea about nine years. Herod Antipas, another of Herod's sons, who was Tetrach of Galilee, was a prince of a milder disposition; and Nazareth, the place to which Joseph went, was under his government. It is very shocking to read of the massacre of so many *innocent babes*, but as they *were* innocent, and were put to death on account of the Saviour of mankind, there is no doubt but that they found in the kingdom of heaven a rich reward for their short sufferings in this world. The church has appointed a day to be kept in commemoration of their death, which is called *the Innocents' Day*.

We should learn from this lesson to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, the king of the Jews, foretold by the ancient prophets; and that it is right to pay homage to him as such. The eastern sages *opened their treasures and presented to the HOLY INFANT gold, frankincence, and myrrh*. Such gifts as these the rich and great only can afford, nor does our Saviour now require them either from Jews or Gentiles. The humblest Christian will find acceptance with the REDEEMER OF THE WORLD, (who now reigns in heaven) if he will worship him in faith and sincerity, and offer the tribute of gratitude and love, which are justly due to him.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 7. The prophecy alluded to in *ver. 3*, is in the 40th chapter of *Isaiah*, which foretold that a messenger would be sent before the Messiah to prepare the people to receive him when he should come. We find that John the Baptist was the messenger or forerunner. Observe, *ver. 2*, how the Baptist began his office, namely, by calling upon men to repent, and the reason he gave for their doing so. The kingdom of heaven signified the kingdom of the Messiah; that which was prophesied of by Daniel in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, *Daniel, chap. 2, ver. 44, 45*. In his dress, and manner of living, John greatly resembled the ancient Prophets; see *2 Kings, chap. 1, ver. 8*. His gar-

ment was coarse and mean, his food plain and simple. The locusts he fed on were a kind of large grasshoppers, and the honey such as he found in the rocks made by wild bees.

Ver. 7 to 13. The Jews were divided among themselves into several sects, or parties of different opinions in religious matters. The chief of these sects were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees distinguished themselves by their zeal for the traditions of the elders. The Sadducees are supposed at first to have only kept to the written word of God, renouncing all other traditions; but it is certain that in our Saviour's time the Sadducees professed to believe only the five books of Moses, and that they denied the resurrection of the dead, the very being of angels or spirits, the existence of the souls of men after death, and a future state of rewards and punishments. These principles rendered the Sadducees a very impious sect. The Pharisees and Sadducees agreed in calling themselves *the children of Abraham*, because as Jews they descended from that patriarch. The Baptist called them *a generation of vipers*, *ver. 7*, because, like that old serpent the devil, they were mischievous and spiteful, though they carried a fair outside. *By the wrath to come*, the Baptist meant the judgments which God had threatened to send upon those who should oppose the Gospel of his Son. *By fruits meet for repentance*, *ver. 8*, he meant belief in God's mercies, and sincere purposes of amendment of life; and he intimated to both Pharisees and Sadducees, *ver. 9*, that none are reckoned *true children of Abraham* who have hardened their hearts against the truth. *By the axe being laid to the root of the tree*, *ver. 10*, the Baptist signified that all the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be cut off from the kingdom of heaven. *By HE who was mightier than himself*, *ver. 11*, he meant the Messiah. *By the baptism of the HOLY GHOST* he meant sending the HOLY GHOST into the soul to cleanse it from the defilement of sin, of which John's baptism with water was an *outward and visible sign*. Observe, that in *ver. 12*, the Baptist compares our Saviour to an husbandman cleansing wheat. The *fan*, an instrument used in a threshing floor, signified the power of CHRIST. The *floor* was the world; the *garner*, or *granary*, heaven; the *wheat*, good people; the *chaff*, wicked ones; the *unquenchable fire* hell.

Ver.

Ver. 13 to the end. Observe, that John refused at first to baptize our Saviour because he thought it too high an honour for him who was so greatly below him. Our Redeemer had no need to be *baptized to repentance* on his own account, for he was free from sin; but it was the will of God that whatever was necessary to make mankind righteous should be performed by the Messiah in his own person. The HOLY GHOST descended visibly upon our LORD as soon as he was baptized to convince John the Baptist that he was the Messiah; and also as a sign that the Holy Ghost would be given in the Sacrament of Baptism. By *the spirit descending like a dove*, *ver. 16*, is understood that a bright and glorious light came down from above, with a gentle hovering motion like that of a dove, and lighted upon the head of JESUS. Take particular notice of *ver. 17*, which proves that our Saviour was free from sin, for God hath no pleasure in wickedness.

Observe, that this portion of Scripture confirms the truth of the second article of the Apostles' creed, in which we profess to believe in JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY; and shows the fulfilment of the ancient prophets concerning the MESSIAH, as the SON OF MAN, that is, the MESSIAH. One principal end of our Saviour's coming in our nature was to set an example to mankind, which all Christians should follow as far as they can. Observe, that as MAN our Lord was baptized with water, therefore all Christians should be baptized with water.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 12. In these verses we have an account of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness. As God saw fit that all mankind should be subject to the temptation of the devil, it was the will of God that their Saviour should be tempted also in his human nature, that he might show his own righteousness by renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and teach mankind how they ought to resist temptation. The meaning of the expression, *ver. 1, then was JESUS led, &c.* is, that CHRIST followed the desire with which he was inspired by the Holy Ghost to do the will of his heavenly father. The desires of the flesh would have led him to avoid these

temptations, but then he would not have gained salvation for mankind. We may be sure that the devil, who tempted our Saviour, was the same wicked spirit who tempted our first parents in the body of the serpent. Satan did not find Christ as he had found Adam and Eve in a paradise, but in a dreary wilderness, where he had not a morsel of food to satisfy his hunger, and where he was to fast for forty days and forty nights, trusting in his heavenly father to support him. Recollect what a voice from heaven had said, *chap. iii. ver. 17*, and observe, that the devil began with tempting our Saviour to try whether he was really the SON OF GOD, by working a miracle to procure food when it was the will of his heavenly Father that he should fast; and take particular notice of our Lord's answer, which shows that we should in times of necessity depend upon the word of God, who has promised to help those that serve and obey him, and not try to relieve our wants by breaking his commandments. The text our Lord repeated is in *Deuteronomy, chap. viii. ver. 3*.

Observe, *ver. 5*, that the devil next tried to persuade our Saviour to cast himself down from the Temple that the angels might bear him up, as was promised in the *91st Psalm, ver. 11, 12*, not to the Messiah only, but to the godly in general. Our Lord's answer shows that we are not to tempt God by running ourselves into danger without any occasion for it, though we are encouraged to depend on his providence in all those dangers to which God sees fit to expose us. By the *holy city, ver. 5*, was meant Jerusalem. The text our Lord made use of in this answer is in *Deuteronomy, chap. vi. ver. 16*.

Observe, *ver. 8, 9*, that the devil next tried to tempt our Saviour to desire the kingdoms of this world and to worship him. If he had succeeded, CHRIST as the Messiah could not have gained the kingdom of heaven, neither could he have been a Saviour to us; but our blessed Lord resolved to do and suffer every thing, even a painful death upon the cross, rather than we should lose the eternal inheritance he was to purchase for us; and we should learn from his example to despise the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, to renounce the devil and all his works, and to resolve to serve GOD truly that we may obtain a place in the kingdom of

of heaven. The text of Scripture our LORD repeated in his answer to the last temptation is in *Deuteronomy, chap. vi. ver. 13.*

The *high mountain, ver. 8*, is supposed to have been part of the desert, or wilderness, in which our LORD was tempted; for that part of the world is very mountainous, and there is one mountain in particular, exceedingly high; it is called *Mount Quarantania*. Observe, *ver. 11*, that when the devil was commanded by CHRIST to depart he instantly fled away, which shows that the way to escape from temptation is to resist the devil, and resolve to worship and serve GOD only. Observe also, that after our LORD had resisted the temptations of the devil angels were sent to minister unto him as the SON OF GOD, and we have reason to think they brought him food to satisfy his hunger; he could then eat without acting contrary to the *word of GOD*; and all who follow his example will experience the goodness of Providence according to their several necessities.

Ver. 12 to 17. The occasion of John the Baptist being cast into prison is related in the *third chapter of St. Luke*. The prophecy alluded to, *ver. 15, 16*, is in the *ninth chapter of Isaiah, ver. 1*, and it signified that the Messiah would live at Nazareth and bring the light of salvation to the people of the land of Zabulon and Naphthalim. The being in the *region and the shadow of death*, meant their being in spiritual darkness, ignorant of eternal life.

Ver. 17. Observe here, that our LORD began his ministry as John the Baptist did his, by calling men to repentance.

Ver. 18 to 23. Our LORD called Peter and Andrew to him that they might be his apostles, that is attendants upon him, to witness his miracles, and hear his discourses, and to preach the Gospel.

By promising to make them *fishers of men*, our LORD signified that they should convert or bring many of their fellow creatures to the knowledge of salvation. It was necessary that our LORD's apostles should *leave all and follow him*, because they could neither have been witnesses of his ministry, or preachers of his Gospel, if they had not done so; and it is still required of those who are ordained ministers of CHRIST to make religion their particular profession, that they may be able to instruct others; but ordinary Christians may fulfil

their religious duties without forsaking their worldly occupations.

Ver. 23 to the end. Observe, that the miracles our Saviour wrought confirmed the truth of his doctrine and proved him to be the SON OF GOD. Without divine power he could not have done the wonderful works mentioned *ver. 23, 24.*

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 13. This lesson is part of that excellent discourse called our LORD's *Sermon on the Mount*; in which he showed, that the kingdom which he came to establish was very different from the kingdoms of this world. It is supposed our LORD *went up the mount*, not only that the multitude which was assembled together might hear him to more advantage, but also because the law of Moses, which he came to fulfil and explain, was given from Mount Sinai. He *sat down*, because it was the custom among the Jews for teachers to sit while they taught the people. Recollect that when the LAW was given from Mount Sinai, the mountain quaked, and there were thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and the LORD descended in a thick cloud; *see Exodus, chap. xix.* and observe, that when the same LORD came to bring the GOSPEL OF PEACE, AND GOOD WILL TO MANKIND, he appeared in the *likeness of man*, as a mild and gentle teacher. The disciples to whom he addressed his discourse, were the people who followed him to learn his doctrines.

Our Lord began his discourse with BLESSINGS, which blessings were designed for his disciples to the end of the world.

The *poor in spirit, ver. 3*, are persons of humble lowly minds, who are willing to receive the doctrines of Christ; and who are more desirous of doing their duty, than of possessing great wealth. *The kingdom of heaven is theirs*; they are reckoned members of it while on earth, and will receive an eternal inheritance in the world to come.

Those that mourn, ver. 4, are persons who are truly penitent for their sins; these are comforted by the HOLY GHOST.

The meek, ver. 5, are persons of gentle, peaceable dispositions, who are patient under injuries and provocations, obedient to the laws of the land, and who submit, without murmuring,

muring, to whatever it pleases GOD to inflict upon them. *These inherit the earth*; that is, they enjoy the blessings of this world more than persons of a different disposition can possibly do.

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, ver. 6, are they who earnestly desire to be righteous in the sight of GOD, and who prefer the good of their souls to all that this world can give. *These shall be filled*; that is, their desire shall be satisfied, they shall become righteous, and receive the reward of righteousness, everlasting life and happiness.

The merciful, ver. 7, are those who feel compassion for the miseries of others, and are ready to help their necessities; who would not willingly inflict pain on the smallest living creature, but who extend their pity to the brute creation.

The pure in heart, ver. 8, are those who avoid all sinful pleasures, because they draw the mind from religion; and who desire to know GOD, and to serve him according to his holy will and commandments. These will assuredly *see GOD*; they will, by the help of the HOLY SPIRIT, understand what is revealed of GOD in the Holy Scriptures; they will see his power, wisdom, and goodness, in his works, and they will hereafter behold him in glory in heaven.

The peace makers, ver. 9, are those who endeavour to live in peace with all mankind, and to make up quarrels and differences betwixt others; this is a truly heavenly temper, and those who cherish it in themselves are acknowledged as the *children of GOD*.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, ver. 10, &c. are those who are ill treated, reviled, and persecuted; for the sake of religion. These will have an extraordinary reward in heaven.

These blessings pronounced by our Saviour upon particular virtues are called the *Beatitudes*.

From this part of our LORD's discourse we learn what sort of persons Christians ought to be; namely, *poor in spirit, penitent for their sins, meek, merciful, earnestly desirous of righteousness, pure in heart, peace makers, and patient under persecution*; and that they should endeavour to glorify GOD, by showing forth, in their own characters, the excellency of the Christian religion. The precepts of our divine LORD are suited to persons of all ranks, ages, and conditions; and

they are so plain, that children may learn them at an early age, and happy will those be who follow them to the end of their days.

Ver. 13 to 17. By calling his disciples *the salt of the earth*, *ver. 13*, our LORD meant, that as they were to cleanse and purify the world by their doctrine, they should be pure and holy in their lives and conversation. By calling them, *ver. 14*, *the light of the world*, and *a city set on an hill*, he meant, that they should be careful to set a good example, for the glory of GOD. When Christians lead bad lives, they are of no estimation in the sight of GOD; and when they set bad examples, they bring dishonour upon GOD and their holy profession.

Ver. 17 to 21. Lest our LORD's hearers should think he came to overturn entirely what Moses had taught, he declared that, on the contrary, he came *to fulfil the whole law*. By *breaking the commandments*, may be understood resolving not to obey them. The laws of GOD, given from Mount Sinai, had been greatly corrupted by the Scribes and Pharisees; our Saviour showed that some of the commandments ought to be carried far beyond the sense given to them by the Jewish teachers.

Ver. 21 to 27. These verses relate to the sixth commandment. *To be angry with our brother without a cause*, *ver. 22*, signifies, to bear malice or hatred in the heart, against any of our fellow creatures, for which there can be no just cause. The word *Raca*, signifies an *empty, worthless fellow*; *fool*, in Scripture language, signifies an *exceedingly wicked person*. *Ver. 23* shows that there will be different degrees of punishment, according to the degree of guilt. By *going to the altar*, may be understood worshipping GOD either in public or private. GOD himself is the *enemy or adversary* of those who act contrary to his holy will and commandments, as those certainly do who presume to come to him with hatred and malice in the heart against any one; for in his sight they are *murderers*. The *prison* into which those will be cast, who die at enmity with GOD, is *hell*; from whence no one can be delivered, because he cannot possibly pay the debt of sin himself.

Ver. 27, 28. Observe, that these verses relate to the seventh

Seventh commandment. They show that the sin of adultery is a very heinous one; and that impure desires render any person guilty of it in the sight of God.

Ver. 29 to 33. These verses signify that we must be ready to part with the things that are most dear to us rather than break God's commandments.

Ver. 33 to 38. These verses relate to the eighth commandment. They show that swearing in common conversation is *taking God's name in vain*, and that it is forbidden by this commandment as well as perjury or false oaths. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, were greatly addicted to the sin of taking God's name in vain; but our Saviour taught them to be plain and sincere in their common discourse, without any appeal to God upon trifling occasions, saying merely that a thing *was* or *was not* so, without swearing to it. This is the meaning of his command to say *yea, yea, nay, nay*, not that they were to use those very words. It is certainly a very great offence to Almighty God to take his holy name in vain.

Ver. 38 to 43. Observe, in these verses, that our LORD recommended to his disciples instead of returning injury for injury to *bear* and *forbear*, and rather to *give* and *lend* to others, than to take any thing from them by violence. The precept in the *44th verse* was very contrary to the doctrines of the Jewish teachers, and those who act according to it will be followers of God. Take notice, that according to our Saviour's doctrine such persons as love those only who love them fall greatly short of their duty; and that those who do any thing to destroy the *peace* or *good name* of their fellow creatures, or who *bear malice and hatred* against them, are reckoned as *murderers* in the sight of God; and if they would escape eternal punishment, they must repent of such offences, and be reconciled to those they have used with any sort of unkindness. *Ver. 48* signifies that we should try to be as like God as we possibly can in the practice of kindness and forgiveness at all times, and towards all persons, instead of giving way to hatred and revenge.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 5. This chapter is a continuation of our LORD's Sermon on the Mount. By *alms* are meant charitable gifts of

of all kinds. *Hypocrites* are people who pretend to be very pious and charitable, but who are wicked in their hearts. The reward these people seek is the praise of men, and even this they lose as soon as their hypocrisy is found out. Observe, *ver. 4*, that those who do good acts in secret for the sake of God and religion, and with a real love for their fellow creatures, may look for a great reward in heaven.

Ver. 5 to 16. Hypocrites are not contented with joining in the public service of the church, but they offer up those which should be private prayers, in the sight of men. Observe, that CHRIST directed his disciples to offer their prayers *in secret*. By *vain repetitions*, *ver. 7*, we may understand saying the same words over and over again, as the worshippers of Baal are described to have done; see *1 Kings, chap. xviii. ver. 26*, and as the Papists do when they make use of their beads. It is highly proper that we should pray to God, and that Christians might know what things to pray for, and how to ask for them, our LORD gave, for the use of his disciples to the end of the world, that most excellent form which is called THE LORD'S PRAYER, and we should attend to the meaning of the words of it. To *hallow God's name*, signifies to praise and adore, and worship God as the greatest of all beings. *Thy kingdom come*, signify, may righteousness overspread the world till CHRIST reigns in all hearts, and all people become inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. *God's will is done in heaven* cheerfully, and from a real love to God; and so it ought to be done on earth. By *daily bread*, is meant every thing we really stand in need of both for our bodies and our souls. By *our debts*, or *trespasses*, are meant, the offences we commit, from day to day, against the commandments of God, by which we contract a debt of sin we never can pay. By *our debtors*, are meant, such of our fellow creatures as offend us in any manner. *Lead us not into temptation*, but *deliver us from evil*, signifies, conduct us safely through the temptations and dangers of this world. *Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever*; is an acknowledgment that God is above all, glorious in majesty and infinite in power. The word *amen* signifies *so be it*.

It is a great happiness and advantage to have a prayer made by the Son of God himself, and we should use it every night and

and morning in the week, and as often as it is repeated in the service of the church; but at all times we must take care to let our hearts go along with our words, or we shall but mock God; neither let us forget that we are required to *forgive others* before we ask forgiveness for *ourselves*.

Ver. 16 to 19. These verses show that our LORD requires Christians to fast upon proper occasions, but that their fasting should consist in secret humiliation of spirit, rather than in the outward tokens of sorrow. For the way in which fast days should be kept, *see Isaiah, chap. viii. and Joel, chap. ii.*

Ver. 19 to 24. By *heavenly treasures*, are meant eternal life, and all the joys and blessings of the world above. *We lay up these treasures for ourselves*, when we believe in Christ, and do those things which he has taught and commanded. We cannot see these treasures with our eyes, but we may see them *by faith*; that is, by the help of the HOLY SPIRIT in reading the Scriptures, we may be as fully convinced that there are such treasures for us in heaven, as we are of the reality of any thing we see with our eyes: but where there is a want of *faith* there is a *spiritual darkness*. Consider how very comfortable this part of our LORD's discourse is. The thought that heavenly treasures may be obtained by such creatures as us, should fill us with delight and hope; and surely we ought to prefer them to all the trifles of this life. Those who possess gold, silver, and jewels, are in continual danger of being robbed of them; the finest clothes are liable to be worn out, or spoiled; but this can never happen in respect to *the treasures of heaven*. We may begin to enjoy the treasures of heaven upon earth, if we study the word of GOD, pray for the help of his HOLY SPIRIT, and trust in his divine promises.

Ver. 24 to the end. By *mammon* are meant the things of this world; whoever sets his heart upon these cannot love God. By *taking no thought*, we are to understand having no care beyond the present day that will make us distrust the care and providence of GOD. By *the righteousness of GOD*, which we are to seek, is meant that righteousness which comes by faith in GOD's mercy through CHRIST. We have the greatest encouragement to lay aside anxious thoughts for the reasons pointed out by our Saviour, and from the promises which

which accompany his observations, but we must not suppose that our LORD meant to encourage us in idleness, by what he said of the *fowls of the air*, and the *lilies of the field*. The birds do not *toil and spin*, but they *work* notwithstanding, and some part of mankind must *sow and reap and gather into barns*, and others must *spin*, or there would soon be a want of some of the necessaries of life; but from our Saviour's words, those whose lot it is to toil and spin, are encouraged to work with cheerfulness, trusting in the blessing of Providence from day to day. Let us always remember that this world is intended as a state of trial, in which each of us must bear our share of evil; but if we maintain a firm trust in God, and cast our care upon him, we shall find that no greater proportion of evil will be allotted for *each day*, than we shall be enabled to bear in that day.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 7. This chapter contains the conclusion of our LORD's Sermon on the Mount.

Ver. 1 to 7. Observe, that these verses are designed to teach every one to examine his own character, and correct his own faults, instead of censuring his neighbours; and they instruct us to consider what kind of persons we have to deal with, before we give advice, especially upon religious subjects. The word translated *mote*, *ver. 3*, means some very small trifling thing, and it stands here for a slight fault in the character of our neighbour; the word *beam* stands for a very great fault in our own. By *that which is holy*, *ver. 6*, we may understand religious discourse; and by *dogs*, are meant wicked, profane persons.

Ver. 7 to 12. By the words *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*, are meant *fervent prayer*. In these verses, we are encouraged to pray fervently to God, and to put the same kind of trust in him as we should in a tender earthly parent. Observe what comfortable assurances are here given by our blessed Saviour, that our prayers, if offered with fervency and perseverance, will be heard. They may not indeed be granted immediately, or just in the way we desire, but we certainly shall have *good things*, what is *best for us*, if we pray as our Saviour has taught us in the LORD's Prayer, provided our hearts go along with our lips.

Ver.

Ver. 12. Remember that this verse is called our Saviour's **GOLDEN RULE**, and, on account of its great excellency, it ought to be deeply written on every heart, for it is useful to persons of every age and condition, and it is so very easy, that all may understand it. In order to know how to follow our Saviour's **GOLDEN RULE**, we should think within ourselves what we should reasonably wish to have done by *others*, supposing they were in *our place*, and we in *theirs*. Every person, for instance, likes to be treated with kindness, civility, honesty, and truth. Parents would have their children dutiful, children would have their parents kind, and so on in all the different relations of life. This short rule is called the *law and the prophets*, because whatever is taught by Moses or the other Prophets concerning our duty to our fellow creatures is contained in it.

Ver. 13 to 15. By the *strait gate* and the *narrow way*, is meant a religious course of life; by the *wide gate* and *broad way which leadeth to destruction*, is meant a course of wickedness. The Christian course is compared to a *strait gate* and a *narrow way*, because there are greater restraints in it than in a course of wickedness; but remember that Christianity restrains us from no one good thing, but only from what would in the end be hurtful: a wicked course, on the contrary, takes off all restraint, but it certainly ends in *destruction*, without timely repentance.

Ver. 15 to 21. Our LORD here warned his disciples against false prophets, or teachers, who preach against Christianity and the doctrines of a holy life, many of whom there have been in all ages of the world; but our LORD has given us a rule to know them by, namely, *their fruits*, by which we are to understand not their *moral actions*, but *the doctrines they teach*; the young and ignorant should carefully beware of false teachers. The only safe way for them, and indeed for all people, is to keep to the appointed ministers of the church.

Ver. 21 to the end. By saying LORD, LORD, *ver. 22*, is meant professing to be Christians. By *that day*, is meant the day of judgment. Observe, that these verses teach us that our LORD will not, at the last day, own any as his disciples merely for *faith*, unless they have followed his blessed example:

example: it is not sufficient to be Christians by profession. Neither will any be reckoned *wise*, whatever their reputation for wisdom may have been, who have not embraced Christ's doctrines, and made them the rules of their lives. By the similitudes in *ver. 24, &c.* we are taught what use to make of the excellent instruction in our LORD's Sermon on the Mount. There was a great difference between the teaching of our Saviour and that of the scribes, or teachers of the Jewish law, in our Saviour's days; they only explained the law according to the authority of the fathers, but CHRIST spake by his own authority, *verily, verily, I say unto you.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 5. By a *leper*, is meant a person afflicted with a loathsome disease called the *leprosy*; every one amongst the Jews who had it was reckoned *unclean*, and was obliged to live in a house by himself, and not permitted to mix with others, even in places of public worship. Whoever was cured, was obliged to show himself to the priest before he could be received again into society. This disease was reckoned incurable, excepting by divine power. Observe, that our LORD performed this miracle in a way which proved him to be possessed of divine power.

Ver. 5 to 14. A *centurion* was an officer in the Roman army, who had the command over an hundred men. *The children of the kingdom, ver. 12,* signified the Jews. The comparison which the centurion made, when our LORD offered to go and heal his servant, signified, that he believed Christ could as easily command away diseases, as he could command his soldiers. By *those who should come from the east and west, ver. 11,* our LORD meant people of the Gentile nations who should become Christians. Consider what a wonderful cure this was, and observe that it was performed to reward the faith of a Gentile.

Ver. 14 to 16. Consider how difficult a bad fever is to cure, that it is often many days, nay weeks, before it comes to its height; that numbers die of this disease, and that even a slight fever requires time and medicine to cure it; but Peter's wife's mother was cured in an instant only by our Saviour's touching her hand. In respect to these three
miracles

miracles we should particularly remark that our Lord performed them by *his own power*. When he healed the leper he said, *I WILL, be thou clean*. When he cured the centurion's servant, he *spake the word only, and he was healed*. These circumstances proved that he was the SON OF GOD. Observe, that each of these miracles was an act of benevolence. Observe also, that both the leper and the centurion gave strong proofs of their *faith*. The one by saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*; the other, by saying, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*. We shall imitate these good persons, in some measure, if we believe what is here related; and if our lives be agreeable to our faith, we shall be among the number of those *from the east and from the west, who will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven*.

Ver. 16 to 18. It appears from these verses that numbers of people were at that time possessed with devils who tormented them in a dreadful manner. The prophecy alluded to, *ver. 17*, is in the *53d chapter of Isaiah, ver. 4*. Our Lord's casting out devils showed that they were not able to resist his power.

Ver. 18 to 23. Observe, that the SON OF GOD, when he took our nature upon him, submitted to a state of the lowest poverty; he had not upon earth a place which he could call his home.

By *the dead, ver. 22*, our LORD meant that part of the disciple's family who not being converted to Christianity were dead in a spiritual sense, having no knowledge of salvation and eternal life.

Ver. 23 to 28. The ships into which our LORD so frequently entered were fishing vessels. Our LORD's words, *ver. 26*, show that though his disciples called upon him to *save them*, they did not thoroughly believe he could do so. From his rebuke all Christians should learn to cherish in their minds such a constant belief in their Saviour as will keep them from desponding fears, and the wonders related of his power in this lesson will help to strengthen their faith, if properly considered. Observe, that our Saviour proved himself to be GOD as well as *man*, by stilling the tempest.

Ver.

Ver. 28 to the end. This was a very wonderful transaction. Their desire to enter into the swine, shows that devils delight to torment; and the manner in which the swine were affected shows that to be possessed with devils made a dreadful change in whatever creature was so possessed. According to the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to eat the flesh of swine, but they kept great numbers to sell to the Gentiles; the loss of two thousand hogs was perhaps intended as a judgment upon the owners for breaking the law, and as a warning to others of the Jewish nation. Our LORD would not suffer the man to follow him, because he was not of the number of those he had chosen for his constant companions; but he sent him home that his friends might rejoice with him on his miraculous recovery. Observe, that by delivering the men who were so miserably tormented by devils, our LORD gave another very strong proof of his being truly the SON OF GOD; and it should lead us to believe that he can deliver us out of the greatest dangers, and defend us from the power of evil spirits. And we should be very thankful to him for preventing them from tormenting us.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 9. From our Saviour's words, *ver. 2*, we may conclude, that the poor man being conscious of many sins he had committed, was fearful he should not be cured; but as he had that faith which was required in those who went to be healed, our LORD assured him of forgiveness. *Blasphemy*, of which the Jews accused our Saviour, *ver. 3*, is the sin of speaking against GOD. If our Saviour had been a mere man, it would have been, as the Scribes and Pharisees thought, blasphemy in *him* to pretend to forgive sins; but as the SON OF GOD, our Saviour had power to do it. Consider, that if our LORD had not been the SON OF GOD he could not have cured the man of his palsy, by only speaking to him; it was therefore as easy to him to do the one as the other; and observe that our LORD proved to all who were present he had power to forgive sins, by enabling a poor wretch who was brought into his presence by four people to take up his own bed, and walk home with it.

Ver. 9 to 14. Observe, that St. Matthew himself here gives an account of our SAVIOUR's calling him to be an apostle.

The

The office of a publican being so very disgraceful, few would undertake it but worldly minded men; but it sometimes happened that persons of a different character engaged in the office for the sake of a maintenance; but the Pharisees made no distinction, they cast a general odium on all publicans. By the readiness with which Matthew forsook all, and followed Christ, it is plain that he was neither greedy of gain nor given up to wickedness. St. Luke informs us that Matthew made a great feast in his own house, in honour of our LORD; the guests consisted chiefly of those who were called by the Jews, in contempt, *publicans* and *sinners*. Our LORD, to whom all hearts were open, knew that many of them would sincerely repent, and gladly receive the gospel; he therefore preferred them to those who thought themselves so righteous as not to stand in need of repentance and forgiveness of sins. The words our Saviour quoted, *ver. 13*, are in the prophecy of *Hosea, chap. vi. ver. 6*. By his application of them we may understand that GOD approves works of mercy and charity rather than the outward ceremonies of religion.

Ver. 14 to 18. Observe, that our Saviour did not oblige his disciples to keep *set fasts* while he was with them, because the nature of his ministry required him to go about from place to place, and converse with all sorts of people. Neither would he expose them to severe trials at that time because they were not able to bear them; but he intimated that their time of suffering would come after he should be gone from them.

Ver. 18 to 35. Consider the nature of all the evils here mentioned as relieved by the merciful goodness of our Lord, and you will be convinced of his divine power. St. Luke relates that the poor woman who had been afflicted twelve years had spent all her living upon physicians, none of whom could give her relief; and observe how she was cured. Consider also how far beyond the power and art of any human being it is to restore the dead to life, to give sight to the blind by a touch only, or to cast out devils, and you must be fully convinced that our Saviour was the SON OF GOD. We should particularly remark that *faith in CHRIST* was a condition always required on the part of those who came to him for relief; and this faith is still the leading principle of the

Christian religion. All the persons named in these verses believed that CHRIST was able to heal diseases, to restore the dead, and give sight to the blind, by his own power; and we ought to believe that he actually did so; and acknowledge him to be the *Son of God*, the great *Emmanuel* prophesied of by Isaiah, *chap. vii. ver. 14.* and by the angel Gabriel, *Luke i. ver. 19.* Nothing could be more absurd than to impute our LORD's casting out devils to Beelzebub, as our Saviour observed on another occasion; *see chap. xii. ver. 25, &c.*

Ver. 35 to the end. What our LORD said of the multitudes, *ver. 37,* had a spiritual meaning. It signified that the Scribes and Pharisees who should have instructed the people had left them in ignorance of the things which related to everlasting life. By *labourers for the harvest*, our LORD meant spiritual teachers. Observe, in these words, the great love of our Saviour for mankind, which should make us thankful to him for the care he has taken to provide ministers in his church from generation to generation.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe the names of the twelve Apostles, and that the number answered to the tribes of Israel. The *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, *ver. 6,* signified the Jews, who were sadly neglected by their teachers. Observe also, that the Apostles were to go first to the Jews, because it was the will of God that salvation should first be offered to those who were his chosen people. Take notice, that the Apostles were to preach the same doctrine and perform the same miracles as our Saviour wrought himself; without these miracles a set of poor ignorant men would have been despised for pretending to teach a religion in any respect different from the doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees. By giving power to others to perform miracles our Saviour proved himself to be the SON OF GOD. Those people who could refuse to believe the doctrine which was so heavenly, and which was confirmed by such wonderful works, must have had very obdurate hearts. Observe what directions our Lord gave concerning them; and who he said would have a milder sentence than these people at the day of judgment.

Ver. 16 to 28. Our LORD foretold the treatment which would

would be given to his disciples, that they might not be disheartened afterwards by the persecutions they would have to encounter. Observe the directions which our LORD gave to them for their conduct in times of persecution, which you will find they strictly followed when they were engaged in their ministry.

Ver. 28 to 34. Though this part of our LORD's discourse was principally designed for his Apostles, there are several things in it which concern all Christians. Observe, in particular, what is said *ver. 28*, and learn from *ver. 29* that the providence of GOD reaches even to those creatures which are regarded by men as of no value. Observe *ver. 30, 31*, which every Christian may apply to himself. Take particular notice also of *32, 33*, which should make you resolve to show by all your words and actions that you think it your greatest honour to belong to Christ. This is *confessing him before men*, and being ashamed of your religion, and leading a wicked life, is *denying him*. Consider how comfortable and joyful it will be to you at the last day to be owned by the Saviour of the world before men and angels, and presented to his heavenly father as a true Christian; and on the other hand how dreadful it will be to be denied by him, and condemned to everlasting torment at the time he is receiving his faithful servants into heaven.

Ver. 34 to 37. These verses related to the quarrels and disputes which our Lord knew would take place even among the nearest relations when some part of a family should be converted to Christianity, and others keep to their former opinions. This happened as early as the Apostle's days, and there have ever since been unhappy disagreements amongst Christians on account of difference of opinion, by which the church has been divided into many sects and parties; and it is to be feared that a perfect agreement in all points will not be brought about till our Saviour's second coming: but in the mean while all who call themselves Christians should endeavour to live in peace with each other; for though men have, contrary to the true design of the Gospel, turned it, as our Saviour foretold, into an occasion of hatred and contention, he came, as the angels declared at his birth, *to bring peace and good will to men*; and those of the same household should agree together in serving God after the same manner, joining

with each other in family prayer, and going to the same place of worship to offer up with one heart and one voice their prayers, praises, and thanksgivings to their Creator.

Ver. 37 to 40. Observe, what is here required of every Christian. To *take up the cross and follow CHRIST*, signifies to resolve to bear all the evils that may befall us with patience, and even to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel, as many saints and martyrs have done, should we be required to do so. Observe, *ver. 39*, and remember that the life which martyrs *lay down* is not to be compared in value to that which they will find according to our Saviour's promise.

Ver. 40 to the end. None but those who lived when there were prophets and apostles upon earth, could gain a *prophet's reward*, by entertaining them with hospitality; but we may entitle ourselves to a reward for *receiving righteous men*; by which we may understand particularly the ministers who are appointed to instruct us in religion; but we are not required to open our houses to every one who calls himself a *Gospel preacher*, because such persons do not go like the Apostles with a commission from CHRIST, and power to work miracles; on the contrary these pretended apostles preach many things contrary to the doctrines of CHRIST, and we should carefully avoid being misled by them. Observe in the last verse of this chapter, that there is a reward provided for *every kind action we do for Christ's sake*; even for the *giving a cup of cold water*. What this reward is we are not told; but we may be certain it greatly exceeds the value of the gifts we have to bestow, and the poorest person upon earth may obtain it.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 20. In the *third chapter of St. Luke* there is an account of John the Baptist's imprisonment. Observe that it was not for his own information that the Baptist sent his disciples to JESUS, but that they might be convinced themselves JESUS was the CHRIST, when they saw him do the wonderful works which the Prophets had foretold the Messiah should do, and heard him preach to the poor. See *Isaiah, chap. xxix. ver. 18, 19; chap. xxxv. ver. 5, 6, and chap. lxi. ver. 1.* Instead of answering the question of John's disciples, therefore our Saviour performed many miracles before their eyes; and then gently rebuked them for having doubted before

before that he was the Messiah, when they must have heard so from the Baptist. The testimony given by our Saviour to John the Baptist was very honourable. It signified that he was steady in his principles, and an enemy to luxury. He was the messenger and witness of the Messiah, and he who *was to come in the spirit and power of Elias*. In these respects John was *greater than all the prophets before him*; but his office was still less honourable than that of the preachers of the gospel. There was a very striking difference betwixt the character of JESUS and John. Our LORD was gentle and social, mixing with men; John was rigid and austere, preaching in a wilderness; but the Pharisees were resolved to find fault with both. We should learn from these verses to believe in Christ as the Messiah, on account of his miracles; and to form a just judgment of his character, not thinking unworthily of him because he mixed in the world, and condescended to the customs of it in common affairs, but remembering that, notwithstanding his humble appearance in our nature, He is *the only begotten SON OF GOD*.

Ver. 20 to 25. Cities become sinful by the sins of those who inhabit them. Observe, that the crime for which the cities of *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, were condemned, was not want of *faith*, but of *repentance*. Though they believed Christ to be sent from GOD, they did not repent and amend their lives. Every person belonging to a city contributes either to the guilt or righteousness of it; each should therefore look to his own reformation. Take particular notice of what our LORD said, *ver. 22*, of the cities in which his miracles had been wrought, which may be applied to all those cities, towns, and villages, in which his doctrines have been preached, and his miracles made known, upon the authority of his apostles who were eye witnesses of them. The sin of the people of such cities, &c. exceeds that of the people of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah, because the latter were ignorant heathens.

Ver. 25 to 28. By the *wise and prudent*, *ver. 25*, our Lord meant those who were wise in their own conceit, and despised his doctrine. By *babes*, those who were humble, and willing to be taught. Remember that the Holy Spirit is bestowed only upon the humble-minded, who by means of this heavenly gift are enabled to understand, in the proper sense, what GOD

has been pleased to reveal concerning his own divine nature; while many who are wise in their own conceit, and above praying for the help of the Holy Spirit, cannot understand these divine things. Observe particularly *ver. 27*, which should teach us to believe what is revealed in Scripture concerning GOD the FATHER, and GOD the SON, though we cannot understand it perfectly, because such divine knowledge is beyond the reach of our capacities.

Ver. 28 to the end. By the *heavy laden* may be understood all who feel their sins a burden upon their minds. By *taking his yoke*, our LORD meant submitting to his laws. The invitation of our Saviour in these verses is very comfortable. Consider what a happiness it is to find *rest for the soul* under all the sorrows and calamities of life, and take particular notice of what those who would have this rest are required to learn of their Saviour.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, that it was not for plucking the ears of corn that the Pharisees took offence at our blessed Saviour, but for eating at so early an hour on the sabbath day. By the *son of man*, *ver. 8*, our LORD meant himself as the Messiah. He was LORD of the sabbath day, because it was he who, in his divine nature, first instituted the sabbath, and he certainly had a right to grant any indulgence to his disciples which he saw fit. We may conclude from this and other passages of Scripture, that our Saviour does not require Christians to keep the sabbath day in the same strict manner as the Jews did by fasting at the beginning of it; but he never abolished the sabbath, or gave authority for making it a day of amusement and riot. The text in *ver. 7*, which our Lord said the Jews did not understand, is in the *sixth chapter of the Prophet Hosea*, *ver. 6*. It signifies, that God prefers works of mercy to the outward ceremonies of religion; and from our Lord's application of it we learn, that if at any time we are required to do an act of mercy, which can only be done on the sabbath day, we may omit our attendance upon publick worship to perform it. Observe, that though our Saviour and his disciples passed through a corn-field on the sabbath day, it was in the way to a synagogue; and Christians who live in *cities*, or who are confined to work all the week, may doubtless indulge themselves with fresh air and exercise

on the Lord's day, provided they go to church, and avoid all improper behaviour and discourse, and employ the rest of their time in reading the Scriptures, and other religious books ; but neither the example of Christ or his disciples will justify those who make the sabbath a day of idleness, riot, and drunkenness. Neither does this portion of Scripture justify those who on the sabbath, or any other day, wastefully pluck the ears of corn, or take them home to their own houses. The Jews were obliged to leave the corn in the corners of their fields for the poor and destitute : our Saviour's disciples were poor and destitute at that time, and without doubt they kept within the letter of the law in this respect, or the Pharisees would have reproached them with the breach of it.

Ver. 10 to 14. Observe, that our Lord having declared himself to be the LORD of the sabbath, gave an evident proof of his being so by performing a wonderful miracle. Consider that none but the Creator could restore a withered hand by his own power. This was also an act of mercy, and our Lord's answer to the question of the Pharisees plainly proves that it is lawful for Christians to help and comfort the sick on the sabbath day, and that those who leave them to suffer for want of assistance, under pretence of keeping the sabbath holy, do not please God. What people would do for their sheep and cattle, for the sake of preserving their property, they ought to do for their fellow creatures from a better motive, that of pity and compassion ; but at the same time we must be careful not to neglect publick worship, excepting in cases of real necessity.

Ver. 14 to 22. Observe, *ver. 14*, the malice of the Pharisees who followed our Lord from place to place, and watched all his words and actions. He withdrew from them because the time was not yet come for his delivering himself into their hands. The prophecy alluded to in these verses is in *Isaiah, chap. xlii. ver. 1, 2, 3*. Observe, that by the quietness as well as the mercy which he showed in all his works, our Lord proved himself to be the Messiah described by the Prophet.

Ver. 22 to 38. Observe, that it was the malice and wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees which made them attribute our Saviour's miracles to the power of the devil. Our LORD showed that he cast out devils by the SPIRIT OF GOD which

was in him; it was therefore *blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST* to impute those miracles to the power of Satan, and he reproved them with severity because they spoke against GOD. None can be guilty of *blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST* but those who are such hardened sinners as to have lost the help of divine grace. If we honour the HOLY GHOST as our *sanctifier*, and pray for his help, he will purify our hearts and give us good thoughts and desires. By the *generation of vipers*, ver. 34, our Lord meant the wicked Pharisees. By *idle words*, ver. 36, are meant *wicked words*. We should be very careful not to speak any words but such as we know are agreeable to GOD's holy will and commandments.

Ver. 38 to 46. The Pharisees required a sign from JESUS that he was the Messiah. Observe, that he had given them signs sufficient to convince them that he was both the SON OF MAN and the SON OF GOD, if they had not hardened their hearts against him; he would therefore give them no other but that of the *prophet Jonas*, which related to his resurrection from the dead. What our LORD said concerning an unclean spirit, ver. 43 to 46, related to the Jews, who went on from one degree of wickedness to another, till at last they put their Messiah to death.

Ver. 46 to the end. These verses are very comfortable. We find that our blessed LORD regards as his near relations all who do the will of his father who is in heaven. This surely is great encouragement to a life of holiness and obedience.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. A *parable* signifies an instructive story. It was our Lord's custom to teach spiritual things by comparing them with such earthly things as his hearers were acquainted with. Most men understand the nature of *sowing*, and the difference that *ground* often makes in the future harvest according as it is neglected or well cultivated. The expression *who hath ears to hear let him hear*, signified that the parable had a spiritual meaning which none would perceive but those who were well disposed.

Ver. 10 to 18. By the *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, our Saviour meant those things which could not have been known

known unless they had been revealed from heaven. By *who-soever hath*, ver. 12, we are to understand those who believed the divine truths which had already been revealed to mankind. *Whoever hath not*, signified those who refused to believe what had been revealed. *Seeing and seeing not*, and *hearing and hearing not*, and *not understanding*, signify having the mind so darkened as not to understand divine truths when plainly revealed. In this state the unbelieving Jews were in the time of the Prophet Isaiah. At first this spiritual blindness was *wilful*, but afterwards it was a judgment from heaven; and this spiritual blindness was inflicted on the unbelieving Jews, as a judgment, in our Saviour's time, so that they could not understand his parables, because they would not believe him to be the CHRIST; but the disciples being willing to learn had the parables explained to them. The *prophets and righteous men*, ver. 17, were those of former times, who believed that a Saviour would come.

Ver. 18 to 24. Observe, that in these verses our LORD explains the parable of the sower to his disciples, by showing the different ways in which those to whom the word of the kingdom, that is, the *gospel*, is preached *receive it*, and *profit by it*. The spiritual instruction to be learnt from the parable of the sower is, that the grace of GOD is necessary to enable us to understand the doctrine of Christ, and that it will be given in great abundance to those who improve by it, but will be taken away from those who do not endeavour to improve. We shall never *bring forth good fruits* if we hear the word of GOD carelessly, and do not pray for his grace to help us to understand it; for the temptations of the devil will draw us into all kinds of wickedness, neither shall we bring forth good fruits, if in times of danger, instead of praying for GOD's grace, we give up our religion from fear of our enemies. Neither shall we bring forth good fruits, if, instead of praying for GOD's grace to support us under all the trials of life, or to keep us in mind of an eternal inheritance, we suffer the cares of the world, or the desire of riches, to occupy our thoughts, and put GOD and heaven out of our heads. But if, on the contrary, we pray to GOD *to give us his grace, that we may always think those things that be right, and by his merciful guidance may perform the same*, we shall *bring forth the fruits*

fruits of a holy life and conversation here, and the more glorious fruits of eternal life and happiness hereafter: but without the grace of God we can do nothing.

Ver. 24 to 31. This parable is explained by our Saviour himself in some of the following verses.

Ver. 31 to 36. The parable of the *mustard seed* related to the wonderful increase of the Gospel by the preaching of the Apostles. That of *the leaven* signified that the religion of CHRIST would make its way all over the world insensibly.

Ver. 36 to 45. The disciples could not of themselves understand the parable of the *tares*, because it related to things which had been kept secret from the beginning of the world, to some of the *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*.

We find from this chapter that there is, as was foretold by the LORD GOD when he passed sentence upon the serpent at the fall, *continual enmity betwixt the seed of the woman*, our blessed Saviour, and *the devil*. That Christ sows *good seed*, or *religion and goodness*, and the devil sows *tares*, or *wickedness*; but it is only *while men sleep*, while they are careless, and do not keep to the doctrines of Christ, that the devil plants wickedness in their hearts. We should therefore be constantly upon our guard against our great spiritual enemy, and pray to GOD to deliver us from the evil which the devil would bring upon us. GOD never fails to deliver those who pray to him, and use their best endeavours, for he regards them *as his children*; but there are great numbers of people in the world who yield their minds to the devil, and become *his children*; these wicked persons greatly distress and injure the good part of mankind, in respect to *the concerns of this life*: but we learn from this Lesson that there is *another world*, in which a final separation will be made betwixt the wicked and the good, when one will receive a glorious reward in heaven, and the other will be consigned to a place of everlasting torment.

Ver. 44 to the end. The parables of *the treasure hid in the field*, and *the pearl of great price*, are designed to show that nothing in this world can be so valuable to us as salvation, and that we should take the utmost pains to know the religion of Christ, that we may obtain salvation. And the parable of the *net* was designed, like that of the *tares*, to show the

the difference which there will be betwixt the good and the wicked in the next world.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, that John the Baptist preserved his character for integrity to the last; and that he had the courage to reprove even a prince for the practice of wickedness. In this account of Herod, we have an example which proves that the devil drives men on from one sin to another when they once yield to his temptations. At first Herod had great reverence for John the Baptist, and heard him gladly, but he certainly did not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; instead of doing so, he married a woman against the laws of the land; then he put the Baptist into prison for telling him of his fault; then he took a rash oath; and at last, to please a wicked woman, he put a good man to death. This should make us resolve to guard against the first temptation. Though Herod had put the Baptist to death, there was a monitor within him which he could not destroy—one who was always accusing him, and filling him with terror—*his own conscience*. Herod was of the sect of the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, yet he thought John the Baptist was risen, and he was afraid. A wounded conscience is the greatest tormentor any one can have; we should therefore strive to keep a quiet conscience, by living a good life. John's enemies did not prosper in the world, for Herod was soon after driven out of his kingdom, and his wicked wife and daughter with him. Death is an evil to none but the wicked. John the Baptist had done what he came into the world for, namely, *to prepare the way for the Messiah*, and *to bear witness that Jesus was he*; and God, after having tried his faith and patience, saw fit to remove him to a better world, and suffered Herod to put him to death, that John might enter into the kingdom of heaven, and receive the great reward promised by our Saviour in his Sermon on the Mount, to those who should be *persecuted for righteousness sake*.

Ver. 13, 14. Our Lord withdrew himself from those parts because he did not see fit to appear before Herod at that time; but observe, wherever he went great multitudes followed him,

him, and he healed them all. And we may be certain that he will heal the souls of all who seek to him to be delivered from eternal death.

Ver. 15 to 22. This miracle was distinguished from the rest of our LORD's wonderful works, by being wrought in favour of a great multitude, which made it the more remarkable. Observe, that our Saviour, by his *own blessing*, multiplied the small stock of provisions which the Apostles produced, and thus proved himself to be the LORD GOD. From our Saviour's *compassion for the multitude*, the rich are instructed to pity the poor, and help their necessities; and the poor should take particular notice, that those whom our Saviour fed were persons who came far and near to receive instruction from him, not those who were rude and clamorous, insisting to be fed; and that the loaves he multiplied were *barley loaves*, such as he himself and his disciples eat. This should lead the poor to attend to their duty in the first place, not doubting but that they will be fed by some means or other, and not to murmur when there is a necessity for them to eat an inferior kind of bread. And every one, whether rich or poor, should take notice that our Saviour commanded the fragments, or broken pieces, to be *gathered up, that nothing should be lost*. Indeed it is very sinful to waste any thing which is good for food.

Ver. 22 to 34. By walking on the sea, our Lord showed his power over nature. Peter could not have trode upon the rough waves without the miraculous support of our Saviour, which was withheld for a moment to try his faith. Observe, that all who saw this miracle acknowledged Christ to be the SON OF GOD.

Ver. 34 to the end. What is here related of our LORD's *walking upon the sea and stilling a tempest*, should produce in us a firm belief of the unbounded power of Christ, and of the care he takes of his servants, there being no danger so great but he can deliver them from it, no affliction so severe but he can bring it to a happy issue; and our benevolent Saviour on these occasions makes his servants more sensible of his love by the comforts and helps he affords them. Do not suppose it was owing to any virtue in the clothes our LORD wore, but on account of the *faith* of those who touched his garments, that they were cured of their diseases.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 10. From our Lord's discourse with the Pharisees we learn that children should help their aged parents; that vows and oaths, which are contrary to the divine law, ought not to be kept; that God rejects the worship of those who honour him only with their mouths, and that he will be served according to his own laws, not according to the tradition of men.

Ver. 10 to 21. These verses teach us that not only external or outward actions defile men, but likewise, and chiefly, wicked and impure thoughts and desires, which lead to all kind of bad deeds. This should lead us to pray to God to grant us his Holy Spirit, that we may have purity of heart and conscience. By *the blind leaders of the blind*, ver. 14, our Saviour meant the Pharisees and their followers who were spiritually blind.

Ver. 21 to 32. The poor woman who followed our Saviour was a heathen, yet she had a strong faith in the power of Christ; and it was to give her the opportunity of showing this faith that our LORD at first appeared not to attend to her, and afterwards spoke to her as the Jews were accustomed to address heathens, who they considered as no better than dogs; it is plain from our LORD's kind answer to the woman, that he was far from regarding her in this despicable light; and from his kindness to those who came to be healed, we learn that *those who come to him he will in no wise cast out*: not that we are to expect our Saviour to do exactly the same things for us that he did for those who followed him when upon earth, but he will certainly do that which is best for our *souls*, if we have a true faith in him.

Ver. 32 to the end. The multitude on whom our LORD took compassion consisted of people who showed their faith by coming from distant places to bring a number of distressed persons to him, and who staid with him till their own stock of provisions was spent, and who glorified God for the miracles they had seen. It is probable that there were eight or nine thousand at least fed by this miracle, for women and children usually compose the largest part of a multitude. From our LORD's compassion to this multitude, we should learn

learn to do what we can afford in order to feed the hungry, especially those who follow CHRIST.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 13. The Pharisees and Sadducees, though they differed in religious opinions, agreed in their hatred of Christ, and took every opportunity of *tempting him*, that is, of trying to draw words from him for which they might bring an accusation against him before the Jewish rulers. They might as easily have known by his miracles and doctrine that our Saviour was the Messiah, as they could know by 'the appearance of the sky what kind of weather it would be. Our LORD called the Jews an *adulterous generation*, because they had broken their covenant with GOD, by rejecting the true Messiah. Our Saviour's disciples often mistook his words, because they did not consider the spiritual meaning of them; they had not yet received the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT to understand all mysteries.

Ver. 13 to 20. Our LORD put questions to his disciples, to give them an opportunity of professing their faith. Peter appears to have had the greatest faith of any of the apostles. *Flesh and blood*, that is, *human nature*, could not have discovered that JESUS was the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD; but this divine truth was revealed from heaven by GOD THE FATHER to John the Baptist, who had communicated it to Peter, and Peter's mind had been opened to receive it. What Peter believed might therefore be said *to be revealed to him by the FATHER*. Our LORD's words, *ver. 18*, signified that Peter should be the first to preach the Gospel after Christ's resurrection; and that he should have the privilege of admitting men into the Christian covenant by baptism, so that they might become *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*, or of refusing them if they had not the proper qualifications required of those who were baptized, namely, *faith and repentance*. The same power was given to all the other apostles afterwards.

Ver. 21 to the end. Our LORD foretold his sufferings that his disciples might know afterwards that nothing happened to him but what was ordained of the Father; and that he *willingly* undertook the redemption of mankind. Peter's zeal
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led him into an error, and our LORD rebuked him, because in this instance he spake as Satan himself might have done. Our LORD's address to his disciples showed that they were to expect persecution, but that they should have a glorious reward at the end of the world. Not only the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, but all false doctrine, may be compared to *leaven*; for it spreads quickly when it can find its way: we should therefore be constantly upon our guard, and beware of those who teach any thing contrary to the revealed will of GOD. There are still various opinions prevailing in the world concerning CHRIST, but none can be right excepting that which Peter professed, *ver. 16*; we should therefore abide by it. From the manner in which our blessed LORD spake of his sufferings, we may be certain that he willingly undertook to die for mankind, which should fill our hearts with the highest love and gratitude, and make us resolve to endure the severest torments, and even give up our lives, if persecutions should arise, rather than forsake our Saviour. Our Saviour's words, *ver. 26, 27*, should lead us to reflect seriously and frequently upon the value of our souls, and the reward of the righteous. *Ver. 28* related to the destruction of Jerusalem which some of the Apostles lived to see.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 14. The sight which the three apostles beheld must have been truly glorious and wonderful. They were now convinced beyond a doubt that CHRIST was the SON OF GOD. Peter desired to make three tabernacles there, in hopes the glorious vision would be frequently seen, as the glory of the LORD had formerly been. Our LORD commanded his apostles to keep this matter secret, because he knew that the report of it would only increase the malice of the Jews, and the time was not yet come for his delivering himself into their hands. From our LORD's glorious appearance at his *transfiguration*, and by the declaration of GOD THE FATHER, we may be certain that he was *truly the SON OF GOD*, and as such we should adore and worship him. He is not at present visible to our eyes, for he now sitteth in heaven at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; but

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we shall behold him at the last day coming in glory, not with Moses and Elias only, but with thousands and ten thousands of angels. In the mean time, if we continue faithful, he will graciously inspire us with courage and fortitude, as he did his apostles when they lay trembling on the earth before him, so that we may enjoy peace in this world and behold him with joy hereafter.

Ver. 14 to 22. It seems the Apostles failed of performing the miracle through *want of faith*; they did not themselves believe that on their commanding the devil, in the name of Christ, he would come out of the child.

Ver. 22 to the end. The *tribute money* was an offering towards public worship at the Temple at Jerusalem, which was paid by the men of the Jewish nation every year, amounting to about fifteen pence of our money. Our LORD, as the SON OF GOD, had a right to refuse paying this tribute, yet, for example's sake, he chose to do it. The miracle he wrought to supply the money was likely to increase the faith of Peter, who was a fisherman. It is supposed that the fish had by some means or other swallowed this piece of money which was a *stater*, in value about *three shillings*; but it was very wonderful that Jesus should know this, and direct that very fish to be caught. From our LORD's paying the *tribute*, we are instructed to pay with cheerfulness the rates appointed for the support of public worship. From our LORD's sending Peter to catch a fish, we learn, that in cases of necessity we should work in our respective callings, in order to earn money, since God's blessing attends honest industry. If Peter had not found money in the mouth of the fish, the sale of it would have fetched him something, and by fishing on he might have got a sufficient number of fish to produce the sum he wanted. It is plain from this miracle, that our blessed LORD, if he had chose it, could have got great riches for himself from the bottom of the sea; but he had renounced all the pomps and vanities of the world, and submitted to a state of poverty for the sake of mankind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Our LORD's disciples, as we learn from *Mark x, 34*, had privately disputed amongst themselves *who should be*

be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, which they expected would be an earthly one. By recommending *a little child* to their imitation, our LORD instructed them to be willing to be taught and governed like children of good dispositions, and at the same time he showed his love and tenderness for children, and all who resemble them, in being willing to be taught and governed. By *offending one of these little ones*, may be understood doing any thing to injure them. From our Lord's proposing *a little child* as a pattern to his disciples, we are taught to consider *humility*, or an *humble mind*, as the ground-work of the Christian religion; without this virtue we cannot be *the children of God*; and if we are not children of God, we cannot be *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*.

Ver. 7 to 15. Offences *will come*, because, according to the present state of the world in which the wicked are mixed with the good, the wicked will try to injure the good. From our Lord's own words it is plain that there is a place of torment provided for the wicked after death, and that the misery of it will be everlasting. From *ver. 10*, we may think that when good children die they become angels, and are admitted into the presence of GOD the Father Almighty. By *cutting off the hand or foot*, and *plucking out the eye*, may be understood putting ourselves to any pain or difficulty to get rid of wicked desires and bad habits.

Ver. 15 to 21. Observe, that in these verses our Saviour establishes the authority of the church, and shows that all its members ought to submit to this authority.

Ver. 21 to the end. *Ten thousand talents* of the money in use at that time among the Jews, amounted to *seventy two millions of pounds* of our money; an *hundred pence* was no more than *three pounds two shillings and sixpence*. The difference of these sums should lead us to reflect how much greater our offences against GOD are, than those our fellow creatures commit against us; and make us ashamed, as well as afraid, to indulge an unforgiving temper, since we stand in need of so much forgiveness ourselves; and if we do not pardon heartily and sincerely the injuries and offences we receive, we must expect a just and dreadful punishment in the world to come.

Ver. 1 to 13. What our LORD here says concerning the divorces which were then so common among the Jews, teaches us in general that many things had been tolerated till then which were not to be allowed under the Christian dispensation. In particular the having more wives than one at a time, and the putting away their wives as the Jews did.

Ver. 13 to 16. The parents who brought their infants to CHRIST had a high opinion of him, and regarded him as the Messiah. The disciples rebuked these people, perhaps, because they interrupted our LORD's discourse, or because they thought it beneath him to attend to *children*, as he came into this world to instruct *men*, and to work miracles. Though our Saviour is no longer on earth, there is no reason to think his kindness for children is lessened. He is still ready to receive all who are brought unto him. Therefore parents should make it their first care to have their infants *baptized*, which is *bringing them to CHRIST*; and children, as they grow up, should be taught that they have been taken to their Saviour, and should be admonished to try, like Christ in his human nature, to *grow in wisdom as they grow in stature*, that they may in time be perfect Christians.

Ver. 16 to 27. The rich young man regarded our LORD as a teacher of righteousness, but from his calling him *good master*, we may judge that he did not believe in him as the *Son of God*, therefore our LORD asked him *why he called him good*. This young man had kept the commandments of the law as far as they related to his duty to his *neighbour*, and he desired eternal life; but he preferred his worldly possessions to it, he could not therefore enter into the kingdom of heaven because he was not willing to do what was necessary for the first Christians, namely, sell all their estates and put their money into one common purse, for the benefit of the whole community. Our LORD's disciples understood from his words, *ver. 23, 24*, that a rich man could not be *saved*; but our LORD's answer shewed that he meant those only who *trust* in riches. There were many rich men in the time of the apostles who sold all their possessions for the sake of the Gospel; and there are many in these days who trust in God, and pray for the help of his Holy Spirit to enable them

to make a good use of their riches; and who would part with all they possess in this world rather than lose eternal life and the treasures of heaven.

Ver. 27 to the end. What Peter said, *ver. 27*, was very true, but he should not have boasted; however our LORD knew that he and his fellow disciples had *left all and followed him*, he therefore gave him a gentle answer to encourage his hopes; and then prepared his disciples to expect to see him suffer; but they had not yet received the *Holy Ghost*, and were so fully persuaded that the Messiah was to reign upon earth, that they could not understand his meaning. Observe our Lord's promise to his twelve apostles, *ver. 28*.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 17. The principal design of this parable was to show that the *Gentiles*, though newly called into covenant with GOD, should enjoy as great privileges as the *Jews*, who had long been called the people of GOD. The vineyard signifies the kingdom of heaven, which begins upon earth. Those first hired were the *Jews*, those last hired the *Gentiles*. *Ver. 16.* To be *called*, signifies to be put in the way of salvation; to be *chosen*, signifies to be put in possession of eternal happiness. Some people, from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, encourage themselves in the thought that provided they repent at the last, they shall be upon an equal footing in the next world with those who have led Christian lives from their infancy; but no such doctrine was ever taught by our Saviour. Every person who is received into the Christian covenant by baptism is *called*, he is invited to partake of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven; and he is required to live according to his Christian profession, and not to trust to a late repentance, for no one can tell whether after a life of wickedness, he shall be inclined to repent, or whether GOD will grant him time for amendment of life; we should, therefore, strive from the first to be among the *few that are chosen*.

Ver. 17 to 29. Our Lord's disciples had taken up so strong a notion that the kingdom of the Messiah would be an earthly one, that they did not comprehend his meaning when he talked of *suffering and rising again*. *Zebedee's children* were *James* and *John*. Our Saviour's address to these apostles was designed to check their ambition, and prepare them for

persecution instead of the worldly honours and dignities they longed for. By *drinking of his cup*, and *partaking of his baptism*, our Lord meant partaking of his sufferings. Our Saviour's words furnish a warning to all Christians to cast out of their hearts all pride and ambition; to live humbly and bear their cross according to the example which the Son of God has given them.

Ver. 29 to the end. These verses give a proof of our Saviour's divine power as well as of his tender compassion. By calling him the *Son of David*, the blind man acknowledged him to be the Messiah.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 12. In the Book of the Prophet Zechariah, chap. ix. ver. 9, we find the following prediction: *Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* By entering Jerusalem in this manner our Saviour showed that he was the Messiah, the true king of Israel, whose coming was foretold by the Prophet. The multitude regarded him as such though he had none of the ensigns of royalty. The word *hosanna* signifies *save we beseech thee*. It was our LORD's constant practice to take his journeys on foot; this is the only instance we read of his going in any other way, and he chose a *beast whereon never man had rode*; but he could, by divine power, bring every creature to his will.

Ver. 12 to 17. There were people who sat at the entrance of the Temple selling doves and lambs for sacrifices, and others who attended to change foreign money into the current coin of Judea. The Temple certainly was not a proper place for traffic of this kind, therefore our Saviour judged proper to put a stop to it. According to the laws of this country, there cannot be such buying and selling and exchanging of money in our churches as there was at the Temple at Jerusalem; but it is to be feared that many who go to church have their minds occupied about bargains and other worldly matters, which is a crime of the same nature. Every one who goes to a place of worship should remember that it is the house of our heavenly Father, and designed for

for a *house of prayer*, not of *worldly business*. From our LORD's entering Jerusalem in the manner foretold by the prophet, and the circumstances attending it, we should acknowledge him to be *the MESSIAH, the true king of Israel*; and we should show that we honour him as such, by lifting up our hearts and voices in praise and adoration to him by whom alone comes salvation. We find that the hosannas of the children were acceptable, therefore the infant tongue should be taught to utter praise to the Redeemer, and those children who are come to the use of their reason should join with the congregation in the house of God, not doubting but that their hosannas will be as pleasing to their Saviour as those of the children in the Temple.

Ver. 17 to 23. The miracle of the barren fig tree appears to have been intended by our LORD to strengthen the faith of the disciples at a time when he was going to suffer death, and to instruct them in the virtue and efficacy of prayer.

Ver. 23 to 28. Our LORD would not give a direct answer to the question which the Pharisees put to him because he knew they had an ill design, and did not ask for the sake of information, but with a view to betray him. But by the parable of the two sons he intimated that those people who were looked upon as the greatest sinners among the Jews had believed the preaching of John the Baptist sooner than the Scribes and Pharisees. This parable is very applicable to all sinners, who repent and return to their duty; and also to bad Christians who, having solemnly engaged to serve God, break their promises and vow, and do not live up to their profession.

Ver. 33 to the end. This parable was designed to show the wickedness and ingratitude of the Jews. The vineyard was the church which God first planted in the Jewish nation; the fruit which they should have given was faith in God's word and obedience to his commandments. The servants sent from time to time were the prophets. The Son was the Messiah. Observe, that the Jews taking this for a real history, and not perceiving it was a parable which had a spiritual meaning, gave judgment against themselves. The prophecy our LORD alluded to, *ver. 42*, is in *Psalms cxviii. ver. 22*, *The stone which was to become the head of the corner*, was that kingdom which in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was described

under the similitude of a stone cut out of a mountain without hands; see *Daniel*, chap. 2, namely, the kingdom of the Messiah. What our LORD foretold, *ver.* 43, was fulfilled after his ascension into heaven. From the parables in this chapter we learn the justice of God's dealings with the Jewish nations, and Christians should take warning from them, for their having been admitted into God's vineyard will be of no benefit to them if they despise their Saviour, or neglect to do the work appointed for them.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 14. In this parable salvation, through Christ, is represented by the marriage of the king's son. The guests, who first received an invitation, were the Jews, who on many pretences rejected it; and have on that account been destroyed, and the city of Jerusalem burnt. Those from the highways and hedges were the Gentiles who, in great numbers, have been received into the church of Christ instead of the Jews who were cast out. The man not having a wedding garment, signified hypocrites, false pretenders to Christianity, who have no faith or holiness. Outer darkness signifies hell, to which the wicked, whether Jews or Gentiles, will finally be condemned. *Ver.* 14. Those who are called, signify all who have the Gospel preached unto them. Those who are chosen, mean those who will finally be received into heaven.

Ver. 15 to 23. The Herodians were a sect among the Jews who opposed the Pharisees in some things, and held that it was lawful when constrained by superiors to comply with idolatry or any false religion. This sect took its name from Herod the Great, who conformed to the Gentiles in some things contrary to the law of Moses in order to please the Romans. The question which the Pharisees and Herodians put to our Lord, *ver.* 17, was a very ensnaring one; if he had said it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar they would have pretended that he could not be the Messiah, or he would have stood up for the liberties of his people; and if he had said it was not lawful they would have immediately accused him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, as a seditious person. Our Lord's most prudent and wise answer disappointed his enemies; and from his words, render unto
Cæsar

Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's, we are instructed that it is our duty to pay those *taxes* willingly which the laws of the country require towards the support of government; we are also taught by them to pay the tribute which is due to the Supreme Being, namely, *praise, thanksgiving, and obedience*, to his divine commandments.

Ver. 23 to 34. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead; they put a case to our LORD which they thought would certainly puzzle him, but he showed that their disbelief of the resurrection proceeded from their not understanding the Scriptures. From our Lord's reasoning with these Sadducees we learn, for a certainty, that there will be a resurrection from the dead, and that in the next world the condition of the good will be very different from what it is in this, and greatly superior to it; but if we would be *equal to the angels in heaven* we must live like *the children of God upon earth*.

Ver. 34 to 41. The *law* means the *ten commandments*, which were written upon two tables of stone by the finger of God, and given to Moses upon Mount Sinai. Remember that the first table contained the four commandments relating to our duty to God; and the second table the six commandments relating to our duty to our neighbour. To love our neighbour as *ourselves*, signifies to love him after the same manner as ourselves, or in other words, to be ready at all times *to do unto others as we would have others do unto us*. The meaning of our Saviour's words, *ver. 40*, is, that all the commandments given by God, and all that the prophets have written concerning the duties of man, relate either to the *love of God* or the *love of our neighbour*. Since we find that it is our duty to love both God and our *neighbour*, we should study what is meant by the *two great commandments*, and show our love by keeping them. Those who *love God with all their hearts* will not break the commandments of the *first table*; those who *love their neighbour as themselves*, will not break those of the *second table*. We have the greatest reason that can possibly be for loving God, for he created us; all we have comes from his bounty, and all we hope for proceeds from his mercy. We can do nothing by way of

return to GOD for all his goodness to us, but he has commanded us to show kindness to our neighbour, and if we do so in obedience to his commandments, and with a desire to please him, God will accept it as done to himself. We have other good reasons for *loving our neighbour*, we receive many kindnesses from our fellow creatures in one way or other, and we have all *one* GOD for our FATHER, *one* LORD JESUS CHRIST for our Saviour, *one* HOLY GHOST for our comforter and sanctifier, *one* earth to dwell in, *one* heaven to hope for. If the two great commandments of the law were kept by all mankind the earth itself would be a paradise.

Ver. 41 to the end. The Pharisees agreed that the Messiah was to be the *Son of David*, but they were ignorant concerning his *divine nature*, therefore they could not understand the passage in the 110th *Psalms* concerning which our Lord questioned them. David, speaking by the spirit of prophecy, called CHRIST LORD, as the LORD GOD who was to take human nature upon him in the person of one of his own race. We should learn from this portion of Scripture to acknowledge our blessed Saviour to be the SON OF GOD as well as the *Son of David*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 13. This part of our Saviour's discourse was designed to show his disciples what kind of people the Scribes and Pharisees were, and to warn them not to follow their example; at the same time our LORD told them, that as Jews they ought to obey the Scribes and Pharisees in matters relating to the law of Moses. *Phylacteries* were bits of parchment with texts of Scripture written upon them, which the Jews wore on their foreheads.

Ver. 13 to 29. We find from our Saviour's own words, that the Scribes and Pharisees who made the greatest pretensions to righteousness committed the worst of crimes, and sought only the praise of men. They set themselves against the Messiah, and did all they could to prevent the people from receiving the Gospel. They made long prayers indeed, but they neglected *works of charity*. They made distinctions in respect to *oaths* which the law of GOD did not allow. They attended only to the outward ceremonials of the law,
and

and neglected every moral duty. Outwardly they were all religion, but inwardly they were all deceit and wickedness.

Ver. 29 to 34. By *building the tombs of the prophets*, the Pharisees pretended to honour their memories, but at the same time they indulged in themselves the spirit of envy and malice which had led their forefathers to persecute these prophets; and our LORD foretold that they would do the very same things in respect to those apostles and righteous men whom he should send to preach the Gospel to them, and that by doing so they would *fill up the measure of the iniquity of their nation*, and provoke GOD to withdraw his grace from them, and cast them off from being his people.

Ver. 34 to 37. In the *34th and 35th verses* our LORD foretold the judgments which would be sent upon the Jewish nation in a few years. Observe, that the thoughts of the miseries which he knew would fall upon the once holy city, moved our LORD with the tenderest compassion, and he lamented that his chosen people, the Jews, should have abused all the invitations to repentance, which he as the LORD GOD had offered them by his holy prophets, and afterwards by John the Baptist, and in his own person as the Messiah. It became our LORD as the SON OF GOD to denounce *woe* or severe punishment to these wicked hypocrites, who were totally unworthy of divine favour and compassion. Our LORD's declaration, *ver. 39*, that *henceforth they should see him no more*, perhaps signified that that would be his last visit to Jerusalem. From our LORD's denouncing woes against the Scribes and Pharisees we learn how very hateful the sins he laid to their charge are in the sight of GOD; this should lead us to avoid hypocrisy and deceit, and to receive the doctrines of CHRIST with an humble and a thankful heart. We should also learn to obey the gracious calls which we have to repentance, and not go on from sin to sin, adding to the guilt of the nation to which we belong, and helping to fill up the measure of its iniquity. In respect to his denouncing woes against sinners we are not to follow the example of our Saviour. It was part of his office as the MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD, to do it, and he knew all hearts, and there was no danger of his judging amiss; but we cannot know our own hearts perfectly, much less those of other people.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1, 2. This chapter contains our Saviour's prophecies concerning the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish nation which were afterwards exactly fulfilled. It also relates to the end of the world.

Ver. 3 to 15. In these verses our Saviour foretold that before the destruction of Jerusalem there would be many calamities in Judea and the surrounding nations; that his followers would be persecuted, and that the Gospel would be preached throughout the Roman empire, which was at that time called the *whole world*.

Ver. 15 to 29. The *abomination of desolation*, signified something very abominable to God, which would be brought into the *Holy City*, or *Temple*; this probably meant *idol images*, which the Romans would bring with them when they came against Jerusalem. This was to be a sign to the Christians to fly from Judea. Observe, *ver. 5, 23, 24*, that they were to be particularly on their guard not to be deceived by *false Christs* and *false prophets*. *Ver. 27* foretold that our Lord's bringing these judgments upon the Jewish nation would be sudden and unlooked for by them. By the *eagles*, *ver. 28*, are understood the *Roman armies*, whose standard was an *eagle*, a bird of prey, which very properly represented a people who made a prey of all other nations. Every thing our Lord foretold in these verses came exactly to pass.

Ver. 29 to 36. The tribulations which began in those days have continued in one way or other upon the Jewish nation ever since; and the Jews still feel the effects of them in being a despised and abject people dispersed all over the world; and according to our LORD's predictions in these verses we have reason to think that when these tribulations cease the *end of the world will come*, when our Saviour will appear in the clouds, as foretold *ver. 30*. By *this generation*, *ver. 34*, is to be understood not the Jews who were then alive, but their nation itself which still exists as a distinct people, though *lifted* as the Prophet expresses it, *among all nations*, *Amos, ix. 5*.

Ver. 36 to the end. The exact time of the end of the world was not known to the Messiah himself at that time as *man*,
neither

neither will it ever be revealed to mankind till it actually happens. We should therefore carefully follow our LORD's admonition, *ver. 44*, by living in such an holy and religious manner that we may be always prepared for it; for it will be a dreadful thing indeed to be surprized by the coming of our heavenly judge in the midst of a wicked course of life! And our Lord, in one sense, *will soon come to every one of us*, for we must all die, and between the day of our death and the day of judgment, nothing can be done towards our salvation; and whenever the day of judgment arrives it will be the beginning of an eternity of happiness to the good, and an eternity of misery to the wicked.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 14. The parable of the ten virgins was designed to show how CHRIST will deal with those who at the day of judgment shall be in a state of preparation for his coming, and with those who shall have lived careless lives. It was a part of the marriage ceremony among the Jews for the bridegroom to go out in the night by torch and lamp light, attended by his friends, to the house of the bride, where she waited for him with her bride-maids, who, upon notice given them, went out to meet him with their lamps in their hands, to light him into the guest chamber, in order to celebrate the nuptials with a feast and rejoicings. The *bridegroom* in the parable is our LORD JESUS CHRIST. The *marriage* is the end of the world, when he will come to receive his *church*, called in other parts of Scripture, the *bride*. The *marriage day*, is the day of judgment. The *five wise virgins* represent sincere and watchful Christians, the *five foolish ones* those who think they have righteousness enough if they can pass in the world for good sort of people, and think but little of providing against our Lord's coming and a future state.

Ver. 14 to 31. By the *talents* given by the master to his servants, are meant the different gifts GOD bestows upon his people, to some more, to others less, such as *riches, wisdom, power, strength*; in short, any thing they can employ to the honour of GOD, the good of their fellow creatures, or the benefit of their own souls. Some people make a good use of these gifts, others a bad one; but we learn from this
parable

parable that every one will be called to a strict account for the use or abuse of his talents, and will be rewarded or punished accordingly. Nor will it be sufficient for any one to be able to say *I have done no harm*; for every person must endeavour to do all the good he can, and there are none who are not able to do some good, for even the bearing of poverty and afflictions properly will be reckoned as a great improvement of talents.

Ver. 31 to the end. In these verses our LORD gives a plain account of the day of judgment. From his words to those on his *right hand*, *ver. 34*, we may understand, that before this world was made there was a better world provided for such as should lead good lives upon earth, and that it was the will of GOD from the beginning, that the wicked should have their portion with devils.

From the whole of our LORD's discourse begun in the last *chapter*, and ended in this, we learn that there certainly will be a *day of judgment*, and that we ought to keep ourselves in constant preparation for it. Our LORD himself has told us in what manner we should prepare ourselves; that we should furnish our minds with Christian virtues, and have a constant view to our latter end; that we should improve our various gifts and talents so as to glorify GOD, and benefit our fellow-creatures; and that we should practise charity and mercy to the utmost of our power. In order to induce us to do so, our LORD condescends to put *the poor* in his own place, and kindly calls them *his brethren*. Surely we ought to be ready to do every thing we possibly can for the Saviour who died for us; but he is exalted far above all poverty or distress, we can do nothing for him; but *the poor are always before us*. There will be naked to clothe, sick persons and prisoners to visit, hungry to feed, thirsty to give drink to, as long as the world lasts. All these the rich can relieve, and the poor themselves have frequent opportunities of helping those who are miserable. *Even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward*. Only let us keep in our minds the inclination to do what our Saviour has recommended, and we shall be sure to meet with objects. Let us then regard the poor with pity for CHRIST's sake, and earn the reward he has promised.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1 to 6. These verses show that nothing relating to our LORD's sufferings was unknown to him. Observe, that he informed his disciples of the very day on which he should be betrayed. Recollect that the feast of the *passover* was kept in commemoration of the LORD's passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew the first born of Egypt. The Jewish priests did not intend to put Jesus to death on that day, but it was the will of GOD that the Redeemer should offer himself up for the sins of the world at that very time.

Ver. 6 to 14. The woman who anointed our LORD with ointment was Mary the sister of Lazarus; *see John, chap. xii.* The fortitude of our LORD was quite astonishing. Though he knew he was very shortly to endure various tortures, and to be put to a most painful and ignominious death, his mind was perfectly calm and serene; he joined the company with his friends, and talked of his death with as much composure as if he had been only going to take a short journey; for he knew that he had in all things done the will of his heavenly Father, and that he should rise victorious from the grave, and ascend to his heavenly kingdom. In this instance, as in every other, our blessed Saviour set an example which no man can come up to; but we should endeavour to be as near it as possible, by preparing our minds for a future state, and trusting in GOD to support us in our dying agonies.

Ver. 14 to 17. The agreement which Judas made with the chief priests shows what crimes avarice will lead men into; and it should make us very careful how we suffer the love of money to steal into our hearts.

Ver. 17 to 20. By *preparing the passover*, was meant providing a lamb to be roasted for supper, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The lamb thus eaten was called the *pascal lamb*, and it was meant to represent the Redeemer, who had delivered Israel out of Egypt, and who was to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin, and save those who had faith in GOD's mercy from eternal death. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST was himself the Redeemer, and is called by John the Baptist, *The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*; *see John, chap. i. ver. 29, 36.*

Ver.

Ver. 20 to 31. Our LORD intimated to his disciples that he knew he should be betrayed, to prove that nothing came upon him that he did not expect, and that he willingly submitted to every thing that was appointed for him to suffer. Observe, that when our Saviour had eaten the last passover with his disciples, he appointed the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper in its stead. The *pascal lamb* was no longer to be sacrificed, for THE REDEEMER was going to give his own body, and to shed his own blood, on the cross, for that great redemption of which the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt was but a type or shadow. When our LORD took the bread in his hand, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, *Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you*, and the cup, saying, *Drink ye all of it, this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, he willingly offered his body and blood for the redemption of mankind; he testified that he was now ready to be sacrificed upon the cross: and when he said, *Do this in remembrance of me*, he ordained the HOLY SACRAMENT of the LORD'S SUPPER, instead of the *passover*, to be a memorial to the end of the world of his dying for the remission of sins. The blood of the New Testament signified the blood of the New Covenant, namely, GOD'S covenant through CHRIST, for the forgiveness of sins to all that should believe in him for his sake. Surely, we ought to hold that holy Sacrament in the highest reverence which our LORD ordained with such solemnity, and for such an important purpose. Yet how many are there who call themselves Christians that never do at any time what our LORD commanded ALL to do in remembrance of him!

Ver. 31 to 36. The prophecy, to which our Saviour alluded, *ver. 31*, is in the *thirteenth chapter of Zechariah*. Peter was a very zealous Apostle, and sincerely loved our LORD; but he had too much confidence in himself, he thought he could stand the severest trials. Our LORD knew the weakness of Peter, and forewarned him of his fall.

Ver. 36 to 47. It was the will of GOD that the Redeemer of the world should undergo the agonies described in these verses, in order to show that he was subject to all the infirmities of our nature, and that he gave himself up willingly

for the sins of mankind; he had none of his own. The humble and fervent prayers which CHRIST made in his agony teach us to pray with perseverance and submission when we are in affliction. The resignation of our LORD to the will of the Father is a proof of his perfect obedience to GOD, and of his love to mankind, and ought to be a pattern to us in every condition of life. The warning our LORD gave his disciples, *ver. 41*, to *watch and pray*, should teach us that watchfulness and prayer are the principal means to overcome temptation.

Ver. 47 to 57. In the manner by which our LORD was betrayed, and his behaviour at the time, we see the treachery of that wicked disciple Judas; and the chearfulness with which our LORD exposed himself to death. The action of the disciple, *ver. 51*, proceeded from rash zeal. Our LORD's rebuke to him, *ver. 52*, is a lesson to Christians never to avenge themselves nor proceed to violence on any occasion. *Ver. 53* shows that our LORD would have had angels to protect him from his enemies if he had prayed for them, but he willingly yielded himself into the hands of wicked men that he might fulfil the prophecies relating to the sufferings of the Messiah. It was from sudden fear only that the disciples fled.

Ver. 57 to 69. Observe, that notwithstanding all the endeavours of the Jews to find false witnesses, and some pretence for condemning our Saviour, he was condemned only for acknowledging himself to be the SON OF GOD. The evidence of the false witness was founded upon our Saviour's declaration; see *John, chap. ii. ver. 19*, by changing a word they altered the meaning of the whole sentence. Observe also, that our LORD remained silent till solemnly called upon in the name of GOD, he then spoke as a king and as the SON OF GOD. It was a custom among the Jews to rend their cloaths in token of grief; the high priest pretended to be greatly shocked at hearing blasphemy. The great patience with which our Saviour suffered all the injuries and insults, and all the unjust treatment he received from the Jews, should excite the highest love and gratitude in our hearts towards him, as he endured all this for our sakes.

Ver. 69 to the end. Peter was in another part of the palace while

while our LORD was under examination. He and all the Apostles certainly ought to have gone boldly and offered themselves as witnesses to the innocence of their master; but they suffered their fears to get the better of their duty and affection. It is likely that Peter was denying him the *third time* when those who guarded our LORD were conducting him from the palace of the high priest to the council chamber. Peter's denying CHRIST is a sad instance of human inconstancy and frailty, which should put all Christians upon their guard; but if they fall they should endeavour to rise like Peter, and atone for their sins, not only by the tears of repentance but by amendment of life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe the difference in the behaviour of Judas and that of Peter; the former instead of retiring to relieve himself by a flood of tears, or going to pour forth his sorrows to a friend, gave way to *despair*, and put an end to his own life. There is no doubt but that our LORD would have graciously pardoned Judas, had he sought to him for forgiveness. How shocking it is to read the answer of the chief priests, when Judas confessed that he had betrayed the innocent! The potter's field was in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and was probably so called from its having been occupied by a potter. It was the people who gave it the name of *The Field of Blood*. The prophet Zechariah foretold the circumstances of betraying the Messiah for thirty pieces of silver, and buying with them the potter's field; *see Zechariah, chap. xii.* Judas designed, without doubt, to end his sufferings at once when he hanged himself, but he had better have endured life even with a wounded conscience, than to plunge into eternity with his guilt upon his head; for had he felt a godly sorrow for his crimes, great as they were, he would have been pardoned. It is certainly the height of folly, as well as wickedness, for any one to attempt to destroy himself, since by such an act, he only increases and prolongs those torments from which he wishes to fly, and adds to their sting the bitter reflection of having committed a crime for which there is no repentance.

Ver.

Ver. 11 to 27. As Judea was a Roman province the Jews could not condemn any one to death, therefore they took Jesus to Pilate. Observe, that our LORD maintained the same dignity before the Roman Governor as he had displayed in the presence of the chief priests; and would answer no question put to him by a *heathen*, excepting concerning his being the *King of the Jews*. The dream which Pilate's wife had seems to have been from God. Pilate showed himself to be a very unjust judge in ordering a person he believed innocent to be scourged, and in yielding him up to the malice of his persecutors. The dreadful imprecation of the people, *ver. 25*, has been fulfilled. We see the effects of it in the state of the Jews at this time. By condemning the MESSIAH to death the Jewish nation brought down dreadful judgments upon themselves and upon their children, which will not be wholly removed till our Saviour comes again in the clouds of heaven.

Ver. 27 to 29. It was the Roman soldiers who treated our LORD with such cruel indignity and mock majesty; the agonies he suffered from the wounds occasioned by the scourging, and the crown of thorns, must have been dreadful. The cross was too heavy for one person to bear, yet there was none among the multitude who surrounded our LORD that offered to assist him in carrying it; but a poor African passing that way, they *compelled* him to do it. *Golgotha* was the Hebrew name for Mount Calvary, a small hill to the north of Mount Sion, and north west of Jerusalem; being the place appointed for the execution of criminals it was shut out of the walls of Jerusalem that the city might not be polluted. This was a proper spot for the purpose of execution, as the malefactors executed there might be seen at a distance and by a great number of spectators. Crucifixion was a most dreadful punishment; the cross was laid upon the ground, and the person to be crucified was laid upon it, with his arms stretched out; then the body was fastened to the cross by large nails driven through the hands and feet. When this was done, the cross was raised up and fixed in the ground; and it frequently happened that the crucified person remained alive, but in great agonies, for a considerable time. The circumstance of *parting the garments*, and *casting lots for the vesture*,

vesture, was foretold by David, *Psalms* xxii. *ver.* 18, and the whole Psalm is a prophecy relating to our Saviour's crucifixion. Observe, as a very remarkable circumstance, that Pilate directed an inscription which, instead of pointing out any *crime*, declared our LORD's *real character and proclaimed his kingdom*. This inscription was written in three languages, that it might be understood by Jews, Romans, and most foreigners. The two malefactors who were crucified with our Saviour were notorious thieves. Observe also, that our blessed LORD prayed for his executioners while they were performing their cruel office. These men were heathens, they knew nothing of the Redeemer.

Ver. 39 to 51. Our LORD certainly could have come down from the cross in a miraculous manner, and might have avoided all his agonies; but then he would not have fulfilled the end of his coming; he would not have suffered *willingly* for the redemption of mankind. And if he had come down from the cross the priests and scribes would not have believed him to be the Messiah; for they had hardened their hearts against him from the beginning, and were in spiritual darkness; they had not the help of the Holy Spirit. St. Luke tells us that only one of the thieves reviled our Saviour, the other was penitent; *see Luke, chap.* xxiii. *ver.* 39. The darkness at noon-day, while our LORD hung on the cross, was out of the common course of nature; for a total eclipse of the sun could not happen when the moon was at the full. It added great solemnity to the scene, and may be considered as a sign of the displeasure of God the Father, at the treatment of his Son. The words our Saviour spake were the same as the beginning of the 22d Psalm; they show that his agony was prodigiously great. We must remember that he suffered only in his *human nature*, his *divine nature* was not capable of suffering; therefore it was *as man* that he uttered this bitter cry. The Jews pretended to misunderstand his words only that they might insult him to the last. Our LORD most likely felt extreme thirst in consequence of his agonies. When he had *received the vinegar* he had completed all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and having done so he *willingly gave up the Ghost*; that is, *died* for the sins of mankind.

Ver.

Ver. 51 to 55. Our LORD was nailed to the cross betwixt nine and twelve o'clock in the forenoon, and expired betwixt three and four in the afternoon. The *rending of the vail of the Temple*, was a sign or token that GOD'S COVENANT with the people of Israel was at an end, and they were no longer the people of GOD. The rocks near Mount Calvary still bear visible marks of the earthquake which split them. The centurion who guarded our LORD during the crucifixion, though a heathen, was convinced that Jesus was not only a *righteous man*, but the SON OF GOD.

Ver. 55 to 62. Observe, that the pious women who had ministered to our LORD before, attended him to the last. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the great council of the Jewish nation, yet he was a true and faithful disciple of our Lord's. There is a fuller account of the burial of our Saviour in *St. John's Gospel, chap. xix.*

Ver. 62 to the end. Observe, that though our LORD'S enemies beheld him a lifeless corpse, covered with wounds and bruises, their malice did not cease; they remembered he had said *that in three days he should rise again from the dead*, and they resolved in themselves to prove him an impostor. Without doubt they looked into the sepulchre to convince themselves the body was there before they closed it up and sealed it; and as the tomb was hewn out of the solid rock, it was not possible to carry the body off by any other way. From the prodigies which happened at our LORD'S death, we may be certain that he was the SON OF GOD; and from the rending of the vail of the Temple, we may conclude that the *old covenant* made with the people of Israel was put an end to. When Christ died on the cross, he fully established the *new covenant*; he had done all that was required by GOD for the redemption of mankind, and had purchased our salvation with his own blood, which is called *the blood of the new testament or covenant*. All the sacrifices of the old covenant were types of the great sacrifice which the Redeemer was to make for the sins of the whole world; when he had made this sacrifice, the sacrifices of the old law lost their signification. Christians, therefore, are not required to observe the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the Mosaic law; they have nothing farther to do with the *old covenant* made on Mount Sinai

than to keep the *moral law*, the *ten commandments*, and the precepts which relate to our duty to GOD and our NEIGHBOUR : these our Saviour confirmed ; this was *the law* he came to fulfil and to *improve*, and it makes a part of the *new covenant* as well as of the *old*. The law of the *New Testament* is that by which we shall be judged ; and this requires us to commemorate CHRIST's death by partaking of the Holy Sacrament, in which his *body* and *blood* are represented by the bread and wine.

The history of our Saviour's crucifixion would be very affecting as an innocent man, persecuted to death by the malice of his enemies ; but our concern must be greatly increased when we consider him as OUR REDEEMER, who endured all those sufferings to deliver mankind from everlasting death. If our Saviour had not died for mankind we could have had no hope of rising from the dead, therefore the thought of what he did and suffered for us, should fill our hearts with love and gratitude ; and should also make us abhor sin, which made those sufferings necessary, and resolve to renounce it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. The pious women who had attended our LORD's crucifixion were desirous of embalming his body, forgetful of his words, so often repeated, that he should *rise again from the dead the third day*. The Jewish sabbath was the day we call Saturday ; the day after the Jewish sabbath answers to our *Sunday* : our LORD expired on the cross about three o'clock on Friday afternoon ; he lay in the grave all Saturday, and rose from the dead very early on the Sunday morning, which was the third day. Observe, that our Lord laid in the grave long enough to prove the reality of his death, and revived soon enough to preserve his body from corruption. It seems the women did not know of the sealing the sepulchre, and setting a watch ; they had only seen the stone rolled to the door of it. The amazement of the guards at the sight of the angel, and at the earthquake which was on the spot where the sepulchre stood, prevented their observing our LORD's resurrection. They were not *chosen witnesses* of this wonderful event. The women supposed that our LORD's enemies had taken away the body. The sight
of

of the angel, and the tidings he brought, filled them at once with fear and great joy.

Ver. 11 to 16. What the soldiers said by the command of the chief priests could not possibly be true. The apostles were not yet sufficiently recovered from their terror at the melancholy events which had for a time destroyed all their hopes, therefore it was very unlikely that they should engage in so desperate a design as that of stealing the body, when the sepulchre which contained it was sealed by the chief priests, and guarded by the Romans. They had no temptation to commit such a theft, nor the least chance of succeeding. It required many hands to move the stone; and if the soldiers had been asleep, the noise of it must have awakened them. The disciples had all along expected their Master to be a great Prince on earth, but after his death this expectation ceased. If the guards had actually slept all the time the body was removing, they could not have told who had done it; besides, it was death by the Roman law for a foldier to sleep upon guard, therefore they would not have owned it: so that the story propagated by the soldiers, at the desire of the chief priests was a very inconsistent one; yet without doubt there were people in the world foolish enough to give credit to it: for ignorant or prejudiced persons may be persuaded to believe any thing, however absurd.

Ver. 16 to 18. It is related by the other Evangelists that our LORD appeared many times to his disciples after his resurrection, and at different places. The Apostles went to Galilee in consequence of the message sent to them by the women.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that our Saviour at this time spoke to his disciples as LORD of heaven and earth, and as such he ordained the SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM in the name of the HOLY TRINITY. The command he gave to his Apostles to *teach all nations*, showed that his Gospel was to be preached all over the world. The promise in the last *verse* signified that the doctrine taught by the Apostles should be established to the end of time.

The resurrection of our blessed LORD should confirm our faith in him as the CHRIST, the SON OF GOD. Some time before his death, our LORD declared that he had *life* in himself, that he had power to lay down his life, and power to

take it again, and we find that he did both; *see John, chap. v. ver. 26, and x. 18.* By the same divine power with which he raised his own body from the grave, and reunited it with the soul, our LORD is able to raise all other human bodies and reunite them with their souls, and he has promised to do so; we should therefore regard our LORD's resurrection as an earnest of our own, and place our full dependance on the performance of his divine promise, that *the dead shall hear the voice of the SON OF GOD, and those that hear shall live.*

ST. MARK.

ST. MARK, the Evangelist, is said to have been the disciple of St. Peter, and to have written his Gospel under that Apostle's direction. St. Mark's Gospel agrees particularly with that of St. Matthew, but he relates some circumstances which are not recorded by the other Evangelists.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 22. These verses agree with the *third and fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*, and help to confirm the truth of what that Evangelist related. The explanations of those chapters are therefore equally suitable to the account which St. Mark here gives of the office of John the Baptist, our Lord's Baptism and Temptation, the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. What is related *ver. 10, 11,* plainly showed that Jesus was actually, as St. Mark calls him in the *first verse of this chapter*, the SON OF GOD.

Ver. 22 to 40. The Scribes were those who explained the law of Moses to the people: in our Saviour's time they were very corrupt. At this time the devil and his angels had more power over mankind than they have since had, and they used sometimes to torment people in a dreadful manner; probably this was permitted that the power of the SON OF GOD might be manifested in casting them out. The cure of Peter's wife's mother is mentioned by *St. Matthew, chap. viii. and St. Luke, chap. iv.* Observe, *ver. 35,* that our Saviour, though the SON OF GOD, retired to pray; and consider how much more necessary it is for sinners to do so.

Ver.

Ver. 40 to the end. The miracle of curing the leper is recorded by *St. Matthew, chap. viii. and St. Luke, chap. v.* Observe *ver. 41*, that *St. Mark* says our Saviour was *moved with compassion*, which shows that he felt for the miseries of mankind; this should lead us to pity our fellow creatures, and relieve them as much as we can. According to the law of Moses every leper as soon as he was cured was to show himself to the high priest as our Saviour directed, *ver. 44*, that he might be again received into the congregation.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 13. The houses of the Jews were usually built only one story high with flat roofs, and each house had a door or lattice opening to the roof. The poor paralytic man was probably let down through the lattice of the house in which Jesus was preaching, and placed before him. Those who took all this trouble certainly must have had great faith in our Lord's divine power, and it was rewarded not only by the cure of this disease, but by the forgiveness of sins. Observe our Lord's answer to the Scribes, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11*, and consider that this miracle proved our LORD to have divine power, for none but God could perform such works; and remember that our Lord's curing *bodily diseases* was a sign that by this power he could and would cure the diseases of the soul, provided the person that was diseased would show faith and repentance. Forgiving sin is *healing the soul*. The miracle of healing the paralytic man is related by *St. Matthew, chap. ix. and by St. Luke, chap. v.*

Ver. 13 to 18. The person called Levi, in the *14th verse*, was St. Matthew who, in the *ninth chapter of his Gospel*, gives an account of his own conversion, which is also related by *St. Luke, chap. v.* From our Lord's answer, when he was censured by the Pharisees for eating with publicans and sinners, we learn that he came into the world to call sinners to repentance. His gracious words ought to fill us with confidence, but should at the same time teach us that we must repent and amend our lives if we would be saved.

Ver. 18 to 23. Do not suppose from these verses that our LORD condemned fasting and mortification; on the contrary his words plainly show that after his death his disciples were

to practise both. By the *bridegroom* that would be taken away, he meant himself. The church is called in some parts of Scripture, in a figurative sense, the *bride*, and our Saviour the *bridegroom*; because there is a covenant betwixt the Lord and his church, as there is between a husband and wife, that neither of them will forsake the other. By the comparison in *ver. 21, 22*, our Lord intimated that as the disciples were but newly converted they were not yet prepared to endure great sufferings for the sake of the Gospel. The bottles in use at that time were made of leather.

Ver. 23 to the end. These verses agree with *St. Matthew, chap. xii. and St. Luke, chap. vi.* What our LORD says concerning David teaches us that in extreme necessity, when the external duties of religion cannot be observed without danger of our lives, or the lives of others, they may be omitted; but we should remember that the seventh day was blessed and sanctified as a sabbath of rest, to be passed in a religious manner immediately after the creation. And that this day is in a peculiar manner the LORD's; we must therefore be very careful not to profane it by making it a working day, a day of amusement, or a day of sin, as it too frequently is by thoughtless and wicked people.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 13. This chapter agrees with *St. Matthew, chap. xii. and St. Luke, chap. vi.* What our LORD said to those enemies of his doctrine, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the just indignation he expressed, shows how great an offence it is to resist the truth, and under a pretence of religion, to condemn works of piety and charity. Our Lord withdrew himself not from fear of the Herodians, but because the time was not yet come for him to deliver himself into the hands of his enemies. *Ver. 11* shows that the devils knew him to be the SON OF GOD, but he did not see fit that they should proclaim him as such; this was to be the office of his Apostles.

Ver. 13 to 22. The choice our Lord made of the twelve Apostles to be with him, and the power he gave them to preach the Gospel, and to work miracles, like those performed by himself, must be regarded as a proof of his great wisdom, as well as of his goodness towards all men, as he was afterwards

wards to make use of the ministry of these Apostles to cause the Gospel to be preached throughout the world. Those who are called our LORD's friends, *ver. 21*, probably were the relations of Joseph and Mary, not regarding him as the Messiah, they looked upon him as a lunatic.

Ver. 22 to 31. From the *30th verse* we learn what our Lord meant by *blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST*, which he said should never be forgiven, namely, the saying that the Messiah, who was filled with the HOLY SPIRIT, was possessed by a devil. Observe, that our Lord's miracles were all acts of mercy and goodness, directly contrary to the works of the devil; and none but the most hardened sinners could impute them to the influence of evil spirits.

Ver. 31 to the end. Our Lord's declaring that he loved his disciples as much as if they were nearest relations, teaches us that the surest means of gaining the love of our Saviour is to believe his word, and keep GOD's commandments. It should also teach us in imitation of him to be kind to those people who fear GOD, and to esteem them above others.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 26. The parable of the sower is related, together with the explanation of it, by *St. Matthew, chap. xiii. and St. Luke, chap. viii.* We should learn from it to examine ourselves, and to try whether we are of the number of those hardened persons upon whom the word of God made no impression; or of those inconstant and cowardly ones, who after having been affected do not continue in a religious course; or of those worldly minded people, in whom the word is rendered unprofitable by the love of the pleasures and riches of this life; or of those faithful hearers who bring forth in abundance the fruit which God expects from them, namely, faith and good works. We should let these divine instructions take root in our heart, always remembering that GOD bestows more light and greater gifts on those who make a right use of them; but that he takes his grace away from such as do not make a right use of them; or who do not improve by them.

Ver. 26 to 35. The parables of *the seed springing up*, and *the grain of mustard seed*, were designed to show that though there was no appearance of it at that time, our Lord's doctrine

trine would soon be spread through the whole earth. Our Lord declared these things in parables that they might furnish proofs of the truth of the Gospel afterwards; but he would not openly declare that his Gospel would be preached to other nations, as the Scribes and Pharisees would have made it a pretence for setting the Jews against him.

Ver. 35 to the end. The disciples by being afraid when Jesus was in the midst of them, showed that their faith was weak; and our Lord's relieving them in the wonderful manner he did is another proof that he was the Son of God. We should learn from these verses to consider that God has power to deliver us out of all dangers, and this should lead us to put our trust in him at all times.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 21. The miracle related in these verses is recorded in the *eighth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*, and the *eighth of St. Luke's*. We may observe in it a most evident proof of the power which the devils exercised at that time by God's permission; but we see that Christ had authority over them; that he came to destroy the kingdom of the devil. He gave the devils leave to go into the herd of swine as a punishment to those who traded in these creatures contrary to the law of Moses.

Ver. 21 to the end. The miracle of raising Jairus's daughter, and healing the woman, are also related by *St. Matthew, chap. ix.* and by *St. Luke, chap. viii.* The example of the woman whose faith our LORD commended, and who was healed by touching the hem of his garment, proves that humility and faith have great efficacy, that trust in Christ is never vain. The great power of our LORD further appears in the raising of Jairus's daughter. The consideration of this miracle should produce in us a firm belief that CHRIST can raise the dead, and should encourage us to the practice of piety and good works, that we may one day be raised by him to a life of never ending happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 7. Our Lord's own country was Nazareth, where he was brought up. His countrymen despised him because
he

he appeared in a lowly condition among them. Though he proved by the wisdom of his discourse, and the wonderful works he wrought, that he was a very extraordinary person. As the people of Nazareth made such an ill use of his presence, our Lord wrought but few miracles among them. Thus it often happens that the prejudices and wickedness of men make them neglect the greatest advantages, till at length God deprives them of his grace because they set no value upon it, but hinder their own salvation.

Ver. 7 to 14. The Apostles were sent to different parts of Judea to declare the coming of the kingdom of God; and, to prove the truth of their doctrine, they had power given them over unclean spirits. They were forbidden to make any provision for their journeys because they were to be short; also, to accustom them early to depend upon Providence. This was the provision made for the first ministers of Christ; but in the present state of the world ministers are to keep to their respective flocks, and live among them, and not go about from place to place to see who receive them into their houses. Neither should people receive those who pretend to be ministers without having authority from Christ to preach; for if they had they would be able to work miracles to prove it like the Apostles.

Ver. 14 to 30. This account of the putting John the Baptist to death shows, that vicious persons commonly hate those who reprove them for their disorderly lives, and that very great evils spring from impurity as well as from rash oaths. It also shows that the wicked and unbelievers have no fixed or settled notions, that a guilty conscience is always in dread, and that wicked men in the horror of remorse acknowledge truths which before they denied. The resurrection of the dead is a truth which few people can bring themselves to disbelieve in earnest, though like Herod and the Sadducees they fancy that they do so.

Ver. 30 to 47. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is the same we have an account of in the 14th chapter of *St. Matthew*, the 9th of *St. Luke*, and the 6th of *St. John's Gospel*; and a most astonishing one it was: none but the Creator could possibly have multiplied the bread and fishes in this manner. It was, in fact, creating them out of nothing.

Ver.

Ver. 47 to 53. The faith of our Lord's disciples was still weak, he therefore graciously pleased to give them more and more proofs that he was truly the Son of God.

Ver. 53 to the end. Observe, that our Lord was able to heal all bodily diseases, without using any of the remedies which men find necessary; if he did but speak it was enough; nay, without his even doing this, many were cured by touching the hem of his garment; and remember that he himself taught us, that his doing these wonderful miracles was a sign that he is both able and willing to forgive the sins and heal the souls of those who believe in him.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 24. These verses agree with the 15th chapter of *St. Matthew*. They show that the Pharisees and Scribes were continually watching our Saviour and finding fault with him. They placed religion in the outward ceremonies of the law, and in certain laws which had been added called the *tradition of the elders*, which were only the inventions of men. Our Saviour taught that it is not by outward washings the heart can be cleansed, but by the casting away all wicked thoughts and desires which lead to wicked actions. Observe, *ver. 21, 22*, what these are.

Ver. 24 to 31. We learn from these verses that the heathens were not to be excluded from the grace of God, and that they were soon to be received into his church as well as the Jews.

Ver. 31 to the end. This miracle is another proof of the divine power of Christ, and shows his great charity and benevolence, which induced him upon all occasions to comfort and relieve the miserable.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 10. This miracle is recorded by *St. Matthew* in the 15th chapter of his Gospel; also, by *St. John*, chapter vi. Consider, that however surprizing it might be to see a small quantity of bread and a few fishes multiplied in the manner here described, it was not more so than the multiplying of loaves and fishes every year by the increase of the seed that is sown in the earth, and by the spawn of fish, for the sustenance.

sustenance of mankind. Bread and other provisions are frequently multiplied to the poor in another way. The providence of God inclines the hearts of the rich to relieve their necessities by charitable gifts.

Ver. 10 to 14. Our Saviour refused to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven to prove that he was the Messiah, because he had already wrought many miracles to which they paid no regard.

Ver. 14 to 22. What our LORD said concerning the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, should teach us to avoid with the greatest care all kinds of false doctrines and dangerous notions, especially such as may lead us into superstition, hypocrisy, or infidelity.

Ver. 22 to 27. By healing this blind man by degrees, our LORD showed he was able to perform miracles in any way he chose; and probably he proceeded in this manner to try the blind man's faith.

Ver. 27 to 34. Observe, in these verses, the different opinions people had concerning our Saviour. He forbade his disciples to preach that he was the Messiah because he was not to take that character publicly till just before his death. Our LORD warned his Apostles of his sufferings and death that they might be prepared for them. He rebuked Peter because being possessed with a notion, like the Jews in general, that the Messiah would reign upon earth as a great king; he could not bear to think of his dying for mankind. By saying *Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me*, our Lord meant to remind Peter that such a wish was more suited to the devil than to an Apostle.

Ver. 34 to the end. To deny ourselves and take up our cross, signifies to give up every thing that stands in the way of our duty, and to resolve to bear with patience all the troubles and calamities of life for the sake of our salvation. If you should be tempted at any time to do a wicked thing to save your life, call to mind our Lord's words, and reflect on the danger you run of losing your own soul; that is, of making yourself miserable for ever. Reflect also, that nothing can possibly be of so much value to you as your immortal soul.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 11. There is an account of our Lord's transfiguration in the 17th chapter of *St. Matthew* and the 9th of *St. Luke*. This glorious appearance proved that he *was truly the Son of God, and also served to strengthen the faith of his Apostles*. The appearance of Moses and Elias on this occasion showed that Jesus was that great Redeemer whose coming the Prophets had foretold. The voice which God caused to be heard from heaven at that time proved that our Lord was the great Prophet whom all men were bound to obey. This transfiguration of Christ was also an image of the glory with which he will appear at the last day; and the presence of Moses and Elias proved that these holy men lived after their departure from this world, and that there is a state of future happiness reserved for the righteous.

Ver. 11 to 24. By Elias our Lord meant John the Baptist. The name of Elias was given to the forerunner of the Messiah, because, like the Prophet Elijah, he was the *Prophet of the LORD*, sent to reform the manners of men, and to establish the service of God.

Ver. 14 to 30. What our Lord said to his disciples at this time shows that the power of working miracles was to be obtained by prayer and fasting; and those means are equally necessary to enable us to resist the temptation of the devil, and to procure us the all powerful assistance of God's grace.

Ver. 30 to 38. The disciples were hindered from understanding what our Saviour said by the notion they had taken up that the Messiah would establish a great kingdom upon earth. The dispute which they had among themselves was owing to the same opinion. Our LORD set a child before them to inspire them with humble sentiments, and to teach them not to despise any one. This lesson concerns all Christians who ought to banish from their hearts all proud and haughty thoughts, and to become like children in meekness, innocence, and humility.

Ver. 38 to 43. Our Lord's words to his disciples should teach us to look upon all men as brethren who profess to believe in him as a Saviour, and that it is a very great sin to despise or ill treat any of his disciples, even though they may

may betray some weakness or appear contemptible to the world.

Ver. 43 to the end. From these verses it plainly appears that there is a hell, and that it is a place of dreadful torment. Let us only consider what misery it must be to be continually in as great agony as if a worm was gnawing us within, and a fire at the same time burning us without; to be *salted* as it were *with fire*, so as not to be destroyed, but preserved from dissolution, and living for ever in pains greater than are endured when the soul is separated from the body by death. Yet these sufferings would fall short of the torments of hell, because a guilty conscience is worse than the gnawing worm, and the rage of malice and despair of the damned worse than the most furious fire that ever was felt.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter agrees with *Matthew, chap. xix. and Luke, xviii.*

Ver. 1 to 13. From these verses we learn that divorces should not take place amongst Christians, but that husbands and wives should be faithful and true to each other, and that no man should have more than one wife at the same time.

Ver. 13 to 17. From our Lord's kindness to the little children who were brought to him we may learn that it is agreeable to his will to dedicate infants to him by baptism and prayer; and that the kingdom of heaven is reserved only for those who, like children, are meek and innocent, and untainted with the love of the world and its vanities.

Ver. 17 to 28. The young man who came to Christ is called by St. Luke a *ruler*. Though he had set his mind too much on his worldly possessions he had a great deal of good in him, for which our Saviour loved him, but he had not resolution to forsake all and follow Christ, therefore he was not worthy to be one of his disciples. No one will find admittance into heaven who fixes his affections upon the things of this world; and there is such a disposition in all hearts to do this, that without the grace of God none would be saved; but this grace will be bestowed on all who pray for it.

Ver.

Ver. 28 to 32. Observe the promises in these verses, and think of the value of the reward held out to those who suffer in any way for Christ's sake. By the *first that should be last*, our Lord meant those Jews to whom the Gospel was first preached, and who rejected it. By the *last that should be first*, the Gentiles to whom it was afterwards preached, and they gladly embraced it.

Ver. 32 to 46. Our Lord knew beforehand all the indignities and cruelties which would be practised upon him, yet he resolved to submit to them for the sake of mankind. The request of James and John, *ver. 35*, showed that they expected the kingdom to be an earthly one. By *the cup he drank of*, and the baptism he was baptized with, *ver. 38*, our Lord meant his sufferings. If we properly consider the great condescension of our Saviour we shall be ready surely to perform the meanest offices for our fellow Christians when charity requires it. To be proud and ambitious on earth is not the way to be great in the kingdom of heaven.

Ver. 46 to the end. This miracle is recorded in the 20th chapter of *St. Matthew*. From our Lord's words to the blind man, *ver. 52*, we may infer, that our Lord requires faith in all who pray to him for relief; if we desire to have our souls enlightened by his grace we must believe that he is able and willing to do it.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 12. These verses agree with the 21st chapter of *St. Matthew*, the 19th of *St. Luke*, and the 12th of *St. John*. Our Lord made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem to show that he was that glorious king of the Jews prophesied of by Zechariah, *chap. ix. ver. 9*. Observe, that notwithstanding his lowly appearance many persons honoured him as the Messiah. Christians therefore who know that he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven should surely rejoice and praise God for having sent this great Saviour to purchase salvation for them, and to give them an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

Ver. 12 to 15. From some of the following verses our Lord showed that his cursing the barren fig tree was to signify to his disciples that they must bring forth the fruits of faith and good works, or they would be cut off from his church.

Ver. 15 to 27. Our Lord drove out those who profaned the Temple because they dishonoured God, and also to show the Jews that as the Son of God he was Lord of the Temple. Christians should take warning from this never to profane the places where God is worshipped and called upon.

Ver. 27 to the end. Our Lord's answer to the Pharisees was intended to convince them that their spiritual blindness and unbelief were *wilful*, and that his authority proceeded from heaven as well as that of John the Baptist.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 13. This parable, which is also in the 21st chapter of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, has been already explained, but the following reflections may be added, namely, that all which our Saviour foretold concerning the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles was fulfilled soon after by the destruction of Jerusalem, and that as God severely punished the ingratitude of the Jews he will more severely punish those who, under the Gospel, despise the offers of his grace and disobey his laws.

Ver. 13 to 18. Observe, from the answer our Lord made to the Pharisees and Herodians, that he well knew their wicked intentions which he totally defeated by his wise and prudent answer; *see Matthew, xxii. ver. 15, &c.*

Ver. 18 to 28. Our Lord also confounded the Sadducees by the answer he gave to them, plainly showing that they erred for want of understanding the Scripture, which would have given them proper notions concerning the resurrection of the dead, and prevented their supposing that mankind would be in the same condition in a future state as they are in this world. It is very comfortable to good people to know that after death they will be admitted into heaven, where they may meet again their dear departed relations, and dwell for ever with them without the fear of being again separated by death. What our Lord said, *ver. 26, 27*, plainly intimate that the souls of men exist after death, for had it not been so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, could not have been reckoned by him at that time among the living.

Ver. 28 to 35. Observe, very attentively, the important lessons

sons contained in this portion of Scripture; and endeavour above all things to fix in your heart the *love of God*, and of *your neighbour*, without which you will never be fit to enter the kingdom of heaven, as our Lord expressly declared.

Ver. 35 to 38. By this question our Lord designed to make the Pharisees sensible of their ignorance, but to Christians it has nothing obscure in it, for we know Christ was the Son of David, because as man he was of his race and lineage, and that as the Son of God he was David's LORD; *see Matt. xxii.*

Ver. 38 to 41. The reproaches Christ cast upon the Pharisees show us that pride, hypocrisy, and covetousness, are most odious vices, especially in those that teach others, and make great professions of piety.

Ver. 41 to the end. The judgment which our Lord passed upon the offerings of the poor widow is a proof that God chiefly regards the heart and intention, and that what the poor give from a principle of piety and charity is as acceptable as the alms and contributions of the rich.

CHAPTER XIII.

The predictions in this chapter are the same as those in the *24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*, and have been already explained. They were exactly fulfilled in respect to the Jewish nation soon after our Lord's departure out of this world, which ought to lead us to believe that what our Lord foretold concerning his second coming to judge the world, and the punishment of wicked men will as surely come to pass. The time of our Lord's coming God has, in his infinite wisdom, seen fit to conceal from us, as well as the time of our own death, but we ought to remember that death and judgment will certainly come; and we should prepare ourselves for both by a devout and holy life, and the practice of every good work, serving God faithfully in our several callings, that we may not be surprized by the terror of that great day which, as our Lord himself tells us, will be sudden and unexpected.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 10. Since our Lord approved of the act of the women who anointed him with precious ointment, and said that

that the remembrance of it should be kept up in his church, we cannot doubt but that he will approve whatever is done for his honour. His reply to those who would have had the ointment sold, should teach us not to form rash judgments, and not to blame too hastily the actions of other people when they may proceed from a good principle. We are also taught, by our Lord's words, to take care of the poor, and embrace every opportunity of doing them good.

Ver. 10 to 22. Nothing could be more wicked than the treachery of Judas. Our Lord celebrated the Feast of the Passover according to the custom of the Jews, to show that he strictly observed every thing prescribed by the law of God. Observe, *ver. 18*, that he saw into the wicked heart of Judas.

Ver. 22 to 27. Christ chose this time for the instituting the Lord's Supper, because this Holy Sacrament was to be in the room of the feast of the passover. The first being designed to commemorate the Lord's passing over the houses of the children of Israel when he destroyed the first born of the Egyptians; the latter to commemorate the Redeemer's saving his people from their sins, by laying down his life for them; see *St. Matthew, chap. xxvi. and St. Luke, chap. xxii. also St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xi. ver. 23, &c.*

Ver. 27 to 32. Our Lord's prediction that Peter would deny him showed that he knew all hearts. Peter was very zealous, but he had weaknesses which he did not think of at that time. This is the case with all Christians; no one therefore should place confidence in his own strength, but all should earnestly and frequently pray to God for that constancy and courage so necessary to keep them from being surprized by temptation.

Ver. 32 to 43. The great anguish which our Lord felt in the garden is one of the most extraordinary circumstances of his passion, but it was part of what was ordained that he should endure in order to atone for the sins of mankind. What agonies of mind would every sinner suffer at the hour of death were it not for the comfortable hopes founded on the *atonement made by Christ* for the sins of the world. We must endeavour to imitate our Saviour to the best of our power, in a perfect submission to the will of our heavenly Father

under all afflictions, but more particularly in resigning ourselves to whatever God sees fit we should suffer in the hour of death.

Ver. 43 to 66. By the manner in which our Lord was taken, and by what he then said to the Jews, we may be certain that he met his sufferings *willingly* to save mankind. This is a powerful call upon us to love our Saviour most fervently. We should also observe that the utmost malice of our Lord's enemies could not convict him of any crime, which shows his perfect innocence; and we should likewise notice the great meekness, humility, and patience which our Lord testified by his words, and by his submission to all the indignities which were offered to him. What our Lord foretold, *ver. 62*, will be accomplished when he shall come at the last day to judge mankind.

Ver. 66 to the end. There is no doubt but that when Peter made his former professions, *ver. 29 and 31*, he was very sincere; yet he basely forsook his Lord and denied him before men when he ought particularly to have confessed him. Peter's fall should put zealous Christians upon their guard against temptation; and it should teach all who are conscious of sin to repent, as he did, without delay. Peter never more denied his Lord, but preached the Gospel boldly, endured severe persecution, and at last suffered death for his sake.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter agrees with the *27th chapter of St. Matthew*, and the same reflections are suitable to it; but we may further observe here how exactly the prediction of Isaiah in the *53d chapter* of his prophecy were fulfilled in our Lord's death and burial. *He was despised and rejected by men; he was truly a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers was dumb, he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: he was cut off from the land of the living, not for his own sins but for the transgressions of the people was he stricken; and he made his grave with the wicked by suffering with malefactors, and with the rich by being buried by Joseph of Arimathea.* We see in all this the great love of the SON OF GOD for mankind, which should lead us to love him

him with all our hearts; and for his sake to renounce sin, which he came to destroy by his death. We should also learn from his example to *bear our cross*, and to suffer patiently the calamities of life when we are called upon to do so. The history of our Lord's burial, and the enquiries Pilate made before he would grant his body to Joseph, prove that he was really dead, and consequently that he rose again. The consideration of our Saviour's burial is likewise very proper to disperse the fears we may entertain of death and of the grave, and to raise our minds to the expectation of a better life.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 9. It was not a man, but an angel, in human form, whom the women saw sitting in the sepulchre, and who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead.

Ver. 9 to 15. Mary Magdalen was the same woman who anointed our Lord's feet with precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair, at the house of the Pharisee. There is a particular account of our Lord's appearing to her in the *20th chapter of St. John*. In the *24th chapter of St. Luke* we are told that our Lord appeared to two of his disciples in their way to Emmaus.

Ver. 15 to 19. The command which Christ gave to his Apostles to go and preach throughout all the world, and the power with which he endued them to work miracles show that he spake as the head of the church and Lord of all; and all things happening as he had said, proved that he was really exalted to a supreme power, and that the doctrine of the Gospel is divine and heavenly. We should particularly observe that Christ spake of Baptism after such a manner as proves the Holy Sacrament to be of divine institution; but that he at the same time declared that it will not save us unless it be attended with true faith.

Ver. 19 to the end. If we reflect properly upon the ascension of Christ we can consider him in no other light than as our king and judge; and as such we must honour and obey his holy laws, and prepare ourselves for his second coming, when we shall all be raised again from the dead, and be received into his heavenly kingdom, if we do not deprive ourselves of the inheritance he has provided for us, by departing from his holy religion and working wickedness.

ST. LUKE.

ST. LUKE was a native of Antioch, in Syria, and by profession a physician. He is supposed to have been converted by St. Paul, to whom he was a companion in several of the journeys which that Apostle took to propagate the Christian faith ; and under his direction St. Luke is supposed to have written his Gospel, in which he relates many circumstances not mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Mark, who are thought to have written their Gospels before him.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 5. It is not certain who *Theophilus* was, to whom this preface is addressed, but the name signifies a *lover of God*.

Ver. 5 to 18. *Herod the king* was Herod the Great ; *Zacharias* was one of the Jewish priests. There is an account in the *1st of Chronicles*, chap. xxiv. ver. 10, of the course of *Abia* ; also, in the *12th chapter of Nehemiah*. From the angel's words to Zacharias it seems, that he had formerly prayed for a child ; he was now promised a very extraordinary one. Turn to *Malachi*, chap. iv, ver. 5, 6, and read his predictions concerning the forerunner of the Messiah, and you will see that the son promised to Zacharias was the person meant by *Elijah the Prophet*, not the *Prophet Elijah* who was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, but one who *should come in the spirit and power of Elijah*, and for the like purpose. The *Angel Gabriel* was the same whom Daniel had seen in his visions ; see *Daniel*, chap. viii. and chap. ix.

Ver. 18 to 26. The words of the angel showed that he came from God, and Zacharias ought to have given credit to him ; but because the things which the Angel foretold were out of the common course of human affairs Zacharias doubted, and required a sign to confirm his belief, and he had a sign which served at the same time as a punishment for his want of faith. We may conclude that Zacharias informed his wife in writing of all that had happened. In this portion

of Scripture we find a very ancient prophecy confirmed and explained by an angel, by which it plainly appears to have been part of the plan which divine mercy had formed for the salvation of mankind, that the Lord should send a prophet to prepare the people of Israel for the Messiah, and that John the Baptist was that prophet. We are therefore required to believe, as much as if we had been present when the angel delivered God's message to Zacharias, that John the Baptist was designed of God, ages before he was born into the world, to be the forerunner of the Messiah; and we must not expect to be excused for our want of faith, by our leading virtuous good lives in other respects. Very few persons come up to the character of Zacharias, yet he was punished for unbelief.

Ver. 26 to 29. The Virgin Mary was a young woman in mean circumstances, but she was notwithstanding of the family of King David, as was also Joseph, to whom she was under a promise of marriage. Joseph was by trade a carpenter. It must have been a great surprize to Mary to be addressed by an angel from heaven as one *who was highly favoured and blessed among women*. This extraordinary occurrence happened about six months after the appearance of the angel to Zacharias.

The Angel's words to Mary concerning the son she was to have, together with what was revealed to Joseph in a dream, *Matthew, i. ver. 23*, explain an ancient prophecy written above 700 years before; *see Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 14*. We find, from the Angel's message, that JESUS was to be both the SON OF GOD, and the *Son of David*. That he was really and truly GOD is revealed by *St. John, chap. i.* and the genealogies in *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* show that he was the Son of David. *The throne of his father David, ver. 32*, signified the kingdom of God; that kingdom which Daniel foretold, (*chap. ii.*) under the figure of *a stone hewn out of a mountain without hands*, and (*chap. vii.*) *that everlasting dominion which should never pass away*.

Upon this portion of Scripture the first two articles of the apostle's creed, which relate to JESUS CHRIST, are founded, namely, that he was the SON OF GOD, and that *he was conceived by the Holy Ghost*; and we are taught by Mary's example to believe them because they were revealed from

heaven. Observe, that when the angel first told Mary that she should be the mother of a child who would be at the same time the SON OF GOD, and the *son of David*, she said, *How can these things be?* But as soon as the angel informed her that they would be brought about by the miraculous power of GOD, she no longer desired to be acquainted with the manner of them, but was satisfied that they would be as the angel had said, because GOD had revealed them, and with GOD nothing is impossible. In this manner all Christians are required to receive the Truths of Divine Revelation. We cannot indeed comprehend the manner in which GOD performs his wonderful works, but we may believe in them notwithstanding, for if they are written in Scripture, we may be sure they are revealed from heaven. None but GOD could know that the Virgin Mary would have a son.

Ver. 39 to 46. When Elizabeth saluted Mary as *the mother of her Lord*, she spake by divine inspiration, for she could not in the time have heard of the angel's appearing to Mary, yet her words agreed with the angel's message to Mary, and they must have been very comfortable to the blessed Virgin.

Ver. 46 to 57. Observe, that Mary so far from being lifted up on account of her being assured that she was the blessed Virgin who was to be the mother of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, gave all the glory to GOD. She also testified her faith, by declaring that she regarded what had been revealed to her by the angel, as the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies, made first to Abraham, and afterwards, to Isaac and Jacob, and other holy men.

Many ages had passed away from the time that GOD first gave the promise of a Saviour to Abraham, and many ages have passed since the angel was sent to the Virgin Mary, in all of which GOD has showed mercy upon his faithful people from *generation to generation*; there is no doubt but that GOD will continue to do so till the end of the world; our care therefore should be to testify our faith by believing the promises of the Gospel, and living as the Scriptures direct us; then will every one have cause to say with Mary, *My spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my Saviour*, for it is impossible to believe in a Saviour without rejoicing.

Mary spake a prophecy by divine inspiration when she said *All generations shall call me blessed; for she is to this day called*
the

the *blessed Virgin*, and most probably she will have that appellation to the end of the world. But some Christians, namely, the Roman Catholics, pay too great honour to the Virgin Mary, calling her the *mother of God*, and the *queen of heaven*, and worshipping her as if she were equal with God, which is making an idol of her. Instead of doing so we should imitate that humility and lowliness of mind which distinguished her character, and gained her the particular favour of God.

Ver. 57 to the end. We have in these verses an account of the fulfilment of the promise of GOD sent to Zacharias in the Temple by the angel Gabriel. It was customary for the Jews to name their children at the time they were circumcised, as Christians name theirs at their baptism. Observe, that as soon as Zacharias gave testimony of his faith, by directing the child to be named *John* instead of *Zacharias*, the punishment which had been inflicted for his want of faith was removed. Elizabeth appears to have had a firm faith in the promises of GOD from the first.

In the prophecy of *Malachi*, chap. iii. we have this prediction, *Behold I will send my messenger to prepare the way before me.* This messenger was without doubt John the Baptist. In this chapter we find Zacharias himself speaking a remarkable prophecy, which agreed both with the predictions of the ancient prophets, and the message he had received from God by the Angel Gabriel. *A horn of salvation*, ver. 69, signified a king who should bring salvation. This horn of salvation was spoken of by the prophets from the beginning of the world. He was *the seed of the woman* promised to Adam and Eve in Paradise. He was *the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed.* He was the MESSIAH who was to deliver Israel from their enemies.

In respect to his son, Zacharias prophesied that he would be the prophet of the LORD; he likewise foretold in what manner *John* would prepare the way of the LORD, namely, by giving knowledge of salvation by the remission, or putting away of sins through the tender mercy of GOD; or, in other words, by preaching, that GOD in his infinite mercy would forgive the sins of his people, and grant them salvation. *The day-spring from on high*, ver. 78, signified the light of the Gospel,

Gospel, and by those *who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, were meant sinners who had no certain hopes of salvation. The *way of peace* signified the way of everlasting life. What is said of John, *ver. 80*, that *he waxed strong in spirit*, signified that he was filled with the Holy Ghost as the angel had foretold, by means of which he had a knowledge of spiritual and divine things beyond his years. By *his being in the deserts*, was meant that he led a retired life, till he should be called forth to appear as *the prophet of the LORD*.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 21. Cæsar Augustus was the Roman Emperor: at the time of our Saviour's birth all nations were in subjection to the Romans. The Roman empire which, according to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, was to succeed the Grecian, was now at its height. Augustus, thus ruling over all nations, resolved to take account of his subjects, and gave orders that they should all go to the cities their families at first belonged to, in order to have their names enrolled, and to be taxed. Joseph and Mary being of the house of David, went to *Bethlehem*, the city of David.

It was foretold by the Prophet Micah that the Messiah should be born *at Bethlehem in Judea*. At the time when the angel appeared to Mary to foretel the birth of Jesus, nothing was more unlikely than that her promised child should be born at *Bethlehem*; for she lived at Nazareth, and she had no inducement to go away from home at such a time to a distant province; but God knowing that Mary would go to Bethlehem at that particular time, inspired the prophet to foretel this circumstance, that it might serve with others to prove that Jesus was the Christ.

The Jews expected that their promised Messiah would be a mighty prince, who would come to deliver them from the Romans, and set them above all the other nations of the earth: but we here read that JESUS the great EMMANUEL, the *Son of the HIGHEST*, the *Saviour of the world*, was born in the lowest condition of poverty; he had not even those conveniences which the poorest people usually contrive to provide for their new born babes. There was no room in the inn for such mean guests as a poor carpenter and his wife;

wife; and thus it came to pass that a manger received the HOLY CHILD who was to save mankind.

But though the SAVIOUR was born in this mean place angels were employed to announce the glad tidings of his birth; not indeed to the rich and great but to poor shepherds who were attending to the duties of their calling. The hymn of the Angels showed that these benevolent beings considered the birth of a REDEEMER as an event which would redound to the honour of God, and the peace and happiness of mankind.

Upon this portion of Scripture another article of the Apostle's creed relating to Christ is founded, namely, that *he was born of the Virgin Mary*. That Mary was the mother of CHRIST was publicly known; and as he grew up to man's estate he always acknowledged her as such. That he was of the *family of David*, was also publicly known, for if Joseph and Mary had not been of this family, they would not have been at Bethlehem at this particular time; and the angel from heaven declared him to be *the son of David, who was CHRIST the LORD*, which was the same as saying he was *the MESSIAH, the Son of the Highest*; for if he had not been so, he would not have been called the LORD by the angel.

By means of the Scriptures, the same things are made known to us, as were made known to the shepherds; we are therefore called upon to believe them also. Mary not only *believed*, but *she pondered these things in her heart*, comparing them, as we may suppose, with the message of the angel, and with the ancient prophecies, and by doing so she strengthened her faith. In this we should imitate the blessed Virgin, and not content ourselves with a slight reading, or merely with the hearing of the word of truth, but meditate upon and lay up in our heart the instruction it conveys. We should also imitate the shepherds by *glorifying God for the wonderful things he has graciously made known to us*; and the thought that the Saviour of the world was born in a state of poverty should prevent any one from murmuring, because God has not thought fit to place him among the rich and great.

Ver. 21 to 25. Joseph and Mary showed they believed what had been revealed to them concerning the *holy child*,
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by naming him **JESUS**. By the law of Moses every mother was required to present her first born son to the **LORD**, and offer a sacrifice according to her circumstances; if in affluence *a lamb*, if in poverty *two turtle doves*, or *two young pigeons*. Observe that the meanest of these sacrifices was made when the **SON OF THE HIGHEST** was presented in the Temple.

Ver. 25 to 34. The *consolation of Israel*, *ver. 25*, was the **MESSIAH**. From part of Daniel's prophecy it was generally expected by the Jews that the Messiah would come about that time; but none of those who lived at Jerusalem supposed that the son of the Virgin Mary was he; nor would Simeon, though it had been revealed to him that he should live to see the Lord's Christ, have thought of *himself*, that a little babe, presented by a poor woman, was to bring salvation to mankind, *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*. But it was put into Simeon's mind by the **HOLY SPIRIT**, that if he went to the Temple immediately, he would there see Him his soul had so earnestly desired to see; and when he saw **JESUS**, he was further inspired to prophecy concerning him.

A light to lighten the Gentiles, *ver. 32*, signified one who should bring the knowledge of salvation to the heathens. *The glory of his people Israel*, signified one who should bring the highest honours to the people of Israel, by being born among them.

Ver. 34 to 36. These verses signified that many would be persecuted for believing in **CHRIST**; that his doctrine would meet with great opposition; that the Virgin Mary would have great sorrow on account of his sufferings; and that he would try the sincerity of men's hearts.

Ver. 36 to 41. Amongst the Israelites there were at that time many pious persons who were earnestly expecting the redemption of Israel, foretold by the ancient prophets; Anna was one of these, she, like Simeon, was inspired to know the Saviour. What is here related concerning our Saviour was at first revealed by the Holy Ghost, and declared by persons whose regard to truth cannot be disputed, and God caused it afterwards to be written in the Scriptures; all Christians therefore are required to believe it. We should then imitate
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the examples of Simeon and Anna, by readily believing JESUS to be the CHRIST; and in declaring this belief publicly; which those of the Church of England have frequent opportunities of doing, by joining with their fellow-christians in the creeds appointed as part of the public service of the church; and by applying to themselves the words of Simeon's hymn. All true Christians may now *depart in peace* whenever it shall please God to call them out of the world, for they have *seen the salvation of God*, they have had convincing proofs from Scripture that God has sent a Saviour to redeem mankind, they know that CHRIST *was the glory of his people Israel*, though many of the Jews have rejected him, and all who remain of the nation now disown him; and many nations besides our own, which were long in heathen darkness, can bear testimony that CHRIST has been *a light to lighten the Gentiles*. We also know from Scripture that every other part of Simeon's prophecy came to pass. Many nations, who were once heathen, have been converted to Christianity, and amongst the rest the British nation.

Ver. 41 to the end. The Jewish children were usually taken to Jerusalem by their parents at twelve years of age, and at thirteen they were examined before the masters of the synagogue, and confirmed by the doctors of the law in the principles of religion. Jesus offered himself to the doctors a year sooner than the usual time, and showed much more knowledge than those who had been under a course of catechizing for a whole year. *His father's business*, *ver. 49*, signified the work which his heavenly Father had appointed him to do. The Jewish doctors were astonished that a child of twelve years old should be so wise in religious matters; they did not know him to be the Son of God.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 3. St. Matthew and St. Mark give an account of the first preaching of John the Baptist, but St. Luke here informs us of the very time at which he preached, namely, in the reign of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, who reigned after Augustus Cæsar, and when Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor in Judea; Herod the Jewish Governor,

or

or Tetrarch, in Galilee, and Annas and Caiphas high priests; and this account is confirmed by Josephus, a Jewish historian, who relates that at that time such a person as John the Baptist did preach, and that he baptized a number of people.

Ver. 3 to 7. The prophecy here quoted is in the *40th chapter of Isaiah*. In the march of eastern monarchs it was usual to send a harbinger, or messenger, before to give notice of his approach, to clear the way, to remove every thing that might hinder the journey of the monarch, by cutting down trees, levelling mountains, and making the roads good. A harbinger was to be sent likewise to prepare the way before the Messiah; but as his kingdom was to be a spiritual one, the preparation of his harbinger was to be of a spiritual nature, and we may understand in what way John the Baptist, who applied the prophecy to himself, was *to prepare the way of the Lord*, from the prophecy of Zacharias his father, *see Luke, i. ver. 76 to 80*; and we find that the Baptist acted agreeably to his office as harbinger of the Messiah.

Ver. 7 to 18. The Baptist was by birth of the priestly order, and as such he had authority to preach; and besides this he appeared as a Prophet. Observe, that John boldly reprov'd all ranks of people, telling those of each rank what they must do to be saved. The particulars of his discourse are explained in the remarks upon the *third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*, but it is here mentioned, *ver. 14*, that the *soldiers* required of him *what they should do*. Observe, that the Baptist did not require them to lay down their arms, but only admonished them to be *merciful, just, and contented*. It was another part of the Baptist's office to bear witness of the Messiah which John did upon all occasions; he never pretended to be any thing more than the *messenger of the LORD*, one who was scarcely worthy to perform the meanest offices for a person of such high dignity. At the time the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, the person of our Saviour was unknown to him. See a further account of his testimony in the *first chapter of St. John's Gospel*.

Ver. 19, 20. Herod the Tetrarch was Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. Herodias was his niece as well as his brother Philip's wife. The Baptist performed his duty in reprov'g Herod, and the king acted a very wicked part in putting him in prison.

Ver. 21 to 23. There is a more particular account of our Saviour's baptism in the *third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.*

Ver. 23 to the end. We find from the *23d verse of this chapter*, that our Saviour entered on his ministry at the age appointed for the priests; before the age of thirty the Jews would have objected entirely to his preaching as contrary to the law of Moses; *see Numbers, chap. iv.* Observe, that the genealogy in this chapter traces our Lord's descent to Adam the first man.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 14 These verses agree with the account of our Lord's temptation in the *third chapter of Matthew.*

It is supposed that during our Saviour's abode in the wilderness every thing he was to do and to suffer, as the Redeemer of the world, was made known to him, and that he willingly undertook to fulfil all righteousness, and to lay down his life for the ransom of mankind. The devil has been the tempter of mankind from the beginning of the world, and he will continue to be so to the end of it; but though God saw fit that mankind should be tempted, in order that their obedience should be tried, he did not, after the fall of our first parents, give up the whole human race as a prey to their spiritual enemy; on the contrary, God graciously *made out a way for them to escape from his temptation.* Knowing that mankind could not stand by their own natural strength, God, in his infinite mercy and goodness, gave them his *Holy Word* for their instruction in righteousness, and his HOLY SPIRIT to help their infirmities; and whoever will make GOD'S WORD the *rule of his life*, and be led by the SPIRIT, will certainly overcome the temptation of the devil. We may know we are tempted by the devil, if we find in our hearts a desire to work any kind of wickedness, or if we think of God contrary to what the Scriptures teach concerning him; and we may know we have the SPIRIT OF GOD, if we find in our hearts a desire to do the will of God, and obtain eternal life in heaven; and we are led by the Spirit when we act according to these desires. If we follow our Saviour's example, we shall obtain a victory over our great spiritual enemy. Remember that all who have been taken into the Christian covenant are bound

bound to renounce the devil and all his works, and to worship and serve the LORD their God only; and if they keep to their part of the covenant, GOD will assuredly keep his part, and regard them as his children, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

Ver. 14 to 16. St. Matthew informs us that our Saviour also wrought many wonderful miracles to confirm the truth of his doctrine.

Ver. 16 to 33. Observe, that it was our LORD's custom to go to the synagogue, or place of publick worship, on the sabbath day. There were seven readers in each synagogue, one a priest, another a Levite, the rest Israelites of that congregation. Our LORD, taking the office of one of these readers, read the lesson for the day, which was part of the *61st chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah*. When our LORD had read it, he sat down, as the custom was, to expound it, and applied it to himself; which was, in fact, proclaiming himself to be the Messiah. But his countrymen would not receive him as such, because they supposed him to be like themselves, a mere man, though he had given proofs, by miracles, an account of which must have reached Nazareth, that he was possessed of divine power. What our LORD said concerning the widow of Zarephath, and Naaman the Syrian, signified that these strangers were preferred because they had more faith in the power of the LORD than the Israelites. Observe, that when the people of Nazareth dishonoured our Saviour, he left them to follow their own opinions, which was a very great punishment, for they were condemned to continue in *spiritual darkness*; and whosoever dishonours him in the same manner, by calling him the *Son of Joseph*, and refusing to believe that he was the *Messiah*, can expect no less than that he will withdraw his grace, and condemn them to the same punishment. We should therefore learn, from this portion of Scripture, to pay due honour to our Saviour. The way to honour our Saviour, is to believe him to be the *Messiah*, the SON OF GOD; to be willing to learn his doctrine; and thankful to him for the Gospel.

Ver. 33 to 38. Before the coming of CHRIST, the devil and his angels had greater visible power than they have had since; they used then to enter into the bodies of people, and torment them in a dreadful manner; but the SON OF GOD had power to cast them out: and we find, by this chapter, that

that the devils knew JESUS to be the *Messiah*, and were sensible that they could not withstand his power.

Ver. 38 to the end. Every one knows that a fever is a dreadful disease which very often causes death; and those who recover from it are many days, sometimes weeks, before they are out of danger; nor are diseases in general, namely, consumptions, dropfies, gout, rheumatism, palsy, and many others cured at all without medicines. Casting out devils must be the work of GOD. Our Saviour's healing all kinds of diseases, only by laying his hands on those who were afflicted, and casting out devils with a word showed that he was truly the Son of God. He would not stay long in any one place because he had many other places to go to in the course of his ministry.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 12. The ships into one of which our Saviour entered were small fishing vessels. His causing the fish to go to the net, proved that he was the LORD, and could do all things. Simon Peter intreated JESUS to *depart from him*, *ver. 8*, because he thought himself unworthy to be in his holy presence. Our LORD's words, *ver. 10*, *Fear not, henceforth thou shalt catch men*, signified that Peter should afterwards convert great multitudes of people to Christianity. Simon Peter's readiness to do what our LORD required, at a time too when he must have been quite tired with working all night, proceeded from his *faith*; he believed CHRIST to be the Messiah, and he thought it his duty to obey his commands. When Peter beheld the miracle, he was struck with the great difference there was betwixt a *sinner*, and the *Son of God*, and he was filled with fear. Our LORD was pleased with his humility, and promised to make him an instrument of good to his fellow creatures; this is one of the highest honours a human being can receive. Peter and his companions forsook all, and followed CHRIST. No one could be of the number of CHRIST's chosen disciples, at that time, without giving up his employment; because he required that they should attend him, to see his manner of life, and his miracles, and also to hear his doctrine, that they might bear testimony to them after his resurrection. But

the case is very different with Christians now; they may mind their business, and have sufficient leisure to follow the example and learn the doctrines of CHRIST; nay, they may obey CHRIST while they are engaged in their worldly pursuits.

Ver. 12 to 16. In the cure of the leper we are to observe that it was for his faith and prayers that he was made whole. Our Lord sent him to the priests that the certainty of the miracle might be known, and that God's laws might be obeyed.

Ver. 16 to 27. It is supposed that the Pharisees and doctors of the law came with the view of finding something for which they might accuse him. We have an account of this miracle in *St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. ix.*, and *St. Mark, chap. ix.* Observe, that our Lord declared, *ver. 24.*, that he had power to forgive sins, and he wrought a wonderful miracle to prove that he had, which miracle we should regard as a certain proof that our Lord really has the power to forgive sins; but no one can expect his Saviour will forgive his sins unless he firmly believes as the paralytic man did, that he is able and willing to do it.

Ver. 27 to 33. The person here called Levi was *St. Matthew*, who gives an account of his own conversion in the *ninth chapter of the Gospel*. Observe, that our Lord chose his disciples and apostles among persons that were looked upon with contempt by the Jews. Our Saviour's reply to the Pharisees, who were offended at his keeping company with sinners, *ver. 32.*, teaches us that the great end of his coming was to save sinners; but that sinners cannot be saved without repentance: it also instructs us to rejoice when God turns sinners from the error of their ways, and to take every opportunity in our power to persuade them to do so.

Ver. 33 to the end. From these verses we may gather that our Lord was so far from condemning fasting, or from suffering his disciples to seek after pleasures and gratify their senses, that on the contrary he calls them to live in sobriety and mortification, and to bear their cross; *see Matthew, chap. ix. ver. 16.*

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 13. These verses agree with part of the 12th chapter of *St. Matthew*, and the 2d of *St. Mark*. We should learn from our Lord's words, when he cured the man on the sabbath day, to avoid hypocrisy, superstition, and rash judgment, and to keep steadily to solid piety, attended with charity. We should also learn from our Lord's curing the withered hand in the presence of his greatest enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, never to omit actions that are truly good and necessary because some people may judge ill of them, and bad men may take offence at them. We find from *ver. 16* of the last chapter, and 13 of this, that our blessed Lord frequently retired to pray. In this we should all follow his example, and nothing can be so comfortable as retiring from the world to hold communion with God, which the repentant sinner is permitted to do through the merits and intercession of Christ.

Ver. 13 to 20. Observe, that the first ministers of the Gospel were mean and inconsiderable in the eye of the world, but through the heavenly gifts bestowed upon them they performed the great work to which they were appointed, and proved by doing so the divinity of Christ's religion, and of his almighty power. The memory of the Apostles should be precious among Christians who ought to receive the doctrine they taught, and to follow the commands of our Saviour, which they have transmitted to us, and the good precepts which through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost they have given us in their writings.

Ver. 20 to the end. The divine discourse in these verses agrees with our Lord's Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5, 6, 7, of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and with part of the 12th chapter, which have been fully explained. The excellent rules of morality taught by our Redeemer himself should be strongly imprinted on our minds, for if we live agreeably to them we shall be his disciples indeed, and shall be finally owned as such at the last day, and rewarded with everlasting happiness.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 11. There is an account of this miracle in *St. Matthew, chap. viii.* Observe, *ver. 9,* our Lord's extraordinary commendation of this centurion who was a heathen. 'This miracle shows, that a lively faith and a deep sense of our unworthiness are the sure means to obtain the mercy of our Saviour.

Ver. 11 to 19. This miracle was a strong proof not only of our Lord's almighty power, but of his goodness and compassion towards the afflicted; and the history of it ought to fill us with trust and reliance in his promises that he will raise all the dead to life. It should also teach us to comfort widows and other afflicted persons to the best of our power.

Ver. 19 to 24. Observe here, a remarkable instance of our Lord's wisdom; he did not give a direct answer to those who asked him whether he was the Messiah, but wrought miracles in their presence, which were more convincing than any declaration he could have made. Our Saviour always avoided calling himself so publicly, but he gave continual proofs of his being the promised Redeemer, the Son of God.

Ver. 24 to 36. The meaning of what our Lord said concerning John was, that, as the Baptist, his forerunner had not appeared in pomp and splendour like the ambassadors of earthly kings, the Jews ought not to be surprized if he himself appeared in a low condition, or reject him upon that account, by which he instructed them that his kingdom was of a spiritual nature. What our Lord says, *ver. 28,* signified that the meanest Christians would be greater than John the Baptist, because they would know more of the Messiah than John did. Observe, that these words show us the advantages of our condition, and they should excite us to act in a manner suitable to it. Observe, that the Pharisees, and those who passed for the wisest among the Jews, rejected both the Baptist and our Saviour. This instance proves that nothing can satisfy a corrupt heart, there is no avoiding the censure of such persons, but those whose hearts are right zealously lay hold of the means which God generally affords for their edification and salvation.

Ver. 36 to 40. It was a custom among the Jews, for servants

vants to wash the feet of guests with water, and anoint their heads with perfumed oil. Simon, by omitting these tokens of respect, showed that he had no reverence for our LORD. It is most likely he invited him with a view of finding some cause of accusation against him. The woman who anointed our LORD's feet, and wiped them with her hair, is supposed to have been Mary Magdalene, out of whom he cast seven devils; whoever she was, there certainly was a very great difference betwixt her and the proud Pharisee. Observe, Simon would not acknowledge CHRIST to be a *prophet*, but our LORD proved himself to be *more than a prophet*, by answering to his thoughts. The parable which our LORD addressed to the Pharisee was designed to show him, that the woman he despised, however bad her former life might have been, would receive GOD's pardon sooner than himself, because he was of an unforgiving temper. How comfortable must our Saviour's words have been to the poor penitent who gave a pattern of that profound humiliation with which great sinners ought to bewail their transgressions!

Ver. 40 to the end. From our LORD's parable, and his discourse after it, we learn, that *sin* is a *debt*, which as sinners cannot pay, they stand in need of forgiveness. Every human creature owes obedience to all GOD's commandments, and we all owe the greatest love and reverence our hearts can feel, to that great Being, from whom our lives, and all good things proceed; and we owe the highest gratitude to GOD for his bountiful mercy and goodness. But not one of all the human race has paid perfect obedience to GOD's commandments, or loved him at all times as he ought to be loved, or made a proper return of gratitude; we are therefore all *debtors to GOD*; some in a greater degree, some in a lesser, and every one to a much greater amount than any of our fellow servants can be to us; we cannot pay our debt, and therefore stand in need of *forgiveness*. But we learn from this parable, that if we are hard-hearted to our fellow-servants, GOD, instead of *forgiving our sins*, will *cast us into the most dreadful of all prisons*, from whence we can never get delivered.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe that our LORD graciously admitted women among the number of his disciples. Chuza is supposed to have been the nobleman whose son was cured at Capernaum.

Ver. 4 to 19. This parable, and the explanation of it, is in the 13th chapter of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and the 4th of *St. Mark's*, and we cannot have it too often repeated to us in order to put us in mind to examine ourselves whether we make a good use of the instruction our Saviour has given us in the Scriptures or not.

Ver. 19 to 22. From our Lord's words when he was told his mother and his brethren were come, we may understand that what chiefly procures us a share in his love is the zeal with which we hear the word of God and do his holy will.

Ver. 22 to 26. This miracle which was wrought in favour of our Lord's apostles is recorded by *St. Mark, chap. iv.* and we should learn from it that our Saviour was more than man, even the Son of GOD, for no creature can command the winds and the water; this is the work of the CREATOR alone.

Ver. 26 to 41. This is the same miracle which is related by *St. Matthew, chap. viii.* and by *St. Mark, chap. v.* and it affords a strong proof that devils fear and dread our Saviour as their judge. We should particularly observe that Christ having delivered the man ordered him to declare abroad what great things God had done for him, and thus ought we to acknowledge and publish the goodness of the Lord towards us when we have received any singular favour or deliverance. We should further consider that though we are not now exposed to the power of devils, so as to be possessed by them, we may fall after another manner into their power if we give ourselves up to work wickedness.

Ver. 41 to the end. Those two miracles are also to be found in *St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. viii. ix.* and *St. Mark's, chap. v.* The speedy and miraculous cure of the woman who had been afflicted for such a number of years, and whose disease baffled the physician's art, not only proves our Lord's divine power, but should teach us that by humility and faith we may be certain of obtaining the favour of Christ, and all things

things necessary for our salvation. The more we think ourselves unworthy of the favour of God's grace the more ready he is to bestow it on us. The raising of the daughter of Jairus is another proof of our Lord's almighty power, which proves that he is able to raise all the dead to life.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 7. *St. Matthew, chap. x.* and *St. Mark, chap. iii.* give an account of our Lord's sending out his twelve Apostles to spread abroad the glad tidings of the Messiah's coming, and to prepare the Jews by their preaching and by their miracles for his reception. But what we are particularly to remark for our own edification is, that those who refuse to hearken to the ministers of God will be rejected by him.

Ver. 7 to 10. It appears from these verses that many of the Jews had a very high opinion of our Lord, for they supposed him to be one of the ancient prophets. *St. Matthew, chap. xiv.* and *St. Mark, chap. v.* tell us that Herod himself was one of those who fancied he was John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Ver. 10 to 18. The miracle of Christ's feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by *St. Matthew, chap. xiv.* *St. Mark, chap. vi.* and *St. John, chap. vi.* All these people were witnesses of this surprizing fact, and became instruments for making the divine power of Christ known in the different places they belonged to; for they would naturally speak of such a surprizing fact as this.

Ver. 18 to 28. We should learn from our Lord's discourse with his disciples, and their answers to him, that faith in Christ consists in looking upon him as the Messiah, and the Son of the living God: that he came into the world to suffer and die: that no one can be the disciple of Christ without taking up his cross, and being always ready to make a publick and sincere profession of his faith: that there is nothing of so great importance to us as the salvation of our souls.

Ver. 28 to 37. The transfiguration of our Lord, and the glory with which the apostles saw him surrounded, is a convincing proof of the truth of the Gospel, as St. Peter himself, who was present at it, takes notice in the *1st chapter of his 2d Epistle, ver. 17, 18.*

Ver. 37 to 46. We read in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, chap. xvii. and *St. Mark's*, chap. xiv. that it was want of faith in our Lord's disciples which hindered them from casting out the devil; had they prayed earnestly, with a full belief, that the miracle would take place it certainly would have been wrought, for our Lord had given them power to cast out devils.

Ver. 46 to 49. From the lessons of humility which our Lord gave to his disciples, we should learn that proud thoughts, and the love of worldly glory, are unworthy of Christians; that on the contrary they ought to place their glory in humility, and esteem all those who believe in Christ and love him, even though they be mean and contemptible in the world.

Ver. 49 to 51. The answer which our Lord made to John, *ver. 50*, teaches us we ought to pay regard to piety wherever we find it, since every thing that is good must come from God.

Ver. 51 to 57. Our Lord's rebuke to James and John, *ver. 55, 56*, shows that Christians should be meek and gentle, and that Christianity does not allow its professors to persecute others for difference of opinion. When Elijah called fire from heaven, he spake the words of the Lord against those who were professed idolaters and despisers of the true God; *see 2 Kings*, chap. ii: but the Samaritans worshipped the same God as the Jews, though they differed from them in several points of religion.

Ver. 57 to the end. The answers which our Lord gave to the three persons mentioned in these verses, teach us that if we would be reckoned among Christ's disciples we must be prepared to forsake all things for the love of him, even such as are innocent and lawful, when they are an hindrance to the discharge of our duty; and that when men have once engaged in the service of Christ they are bound to follow him, and not to look back on the world.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 13. We here find that Christ, who had before chosen twelve Apostles, was pleased to make choice of seventy disciples, and send them into Judea, that the happy tidings of the

the kingdom of God might be spread with the greater dispatch, and that they might be able to go and preach the same doctrine throughout all the world afterwards.

Ver. 13 to 21. The threatenings which Christ denounced against the cities of Galilee, where he had preached and done miracles, show us that those who receive the greatest favours from heaven often abuse them in a shameful manner, and that those who have the Gospel preached to them, and do not grow better for it, must expect the severest punishment. Our Lord's words, *ver. 18*, signified that the kingdom of Satan would be destroyed. *Ver. 20* shows the advantage of belonging to God, and that being in the number of true believers is far more valuable than the power of working miracles.

Ver. 21 to 25. These verses teach, that many who think themselves wise know much less of the truth of religion than many of those whom they esteem ignorant and foolish, and that it is the meek and lowly, and such as are of a sincere and honest heart who understand the Scriptures. The advantage the Apostles enjoyed in knowing those truths, which were not known to the ancient prophets, is now enjoyed by Christians in general; but let us remember at the same time that if we do not make a good use of it, such knowledge will only serve to render us more miserable.

Ver. 25 to 38. The person here called a *lawyer* was a *scribe*, one whose business it was to study the law of Moses, and explain it to the people. The Jews had very narrow notions in respect to those who were to be reckoned neighbours; they owned none as such but those of their own nation, and as to the Samaritans, they hated them. *Two pence*, the sum which the good Samaritan left, amounted to about four shillings.

From our Saviour's words to the Scribe, *ver. 28*, *This do, and thou shalt live*, we may judge, that if mankind performed their duty to God and their neighbour perfectly, that is, if they kept all God's commandments exactly, they would have no need of a Saviour; but the case is very different; the first man, Adam, disobeyed the law of God when it contained but one commandment; and all human creatures that ever came into the world have, in one way or other, acted contrary to God's laws, consequently they have all stood in
need

need of a Saviour. Remember, therefore, that after you have done your best, you must trust in the merits of your Redeemer, and not in your own righteousness, for salvation; but in order to show that you have a regard to GOD's commandments, you must try to do your duty to GOD and your neighbour as well as you can; and remember, that every human creature to whom you have opportunities of showing kindness and compassion is to be considered as your neighbour.

Ver. 38 to the end. Observe, that the two sisters, Martha and Mary, had each a high esteem for our LORD, but they showed it in different ways. Martha was desirous to give him a good entertainment; Mary to hearken to his instructions. Our Saviour cared not for earthly feasts; *his meat and drink was to do the will of his Father*; and he made this visit with a design to give those he honoured with his friendship spiritual instruction. He reproved Martha because her hospitality was greater than her piety, and he commended Mary because she wished to improve by his discourse. From our LORD's words to Martha we should learn, that Religion should be the principal thing with us, and that worldly cares should yield to it. Our LORD did not forbid all hospitality, for he sometimes went to feasts himself; but in this *chapter* he gave an excellent rule for people of every condition, namely, *not to cumber themselves with much serving*, but to *remember the one thing needful*, or in other words, not to waste that time in entertaining company which ought to be spent in improving the mind in religion.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 14. This divine prayer is the same as that in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, chap. vi. excepting that *St. Luke* has omitted the Doxology at the end, namely, *Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.* All that is most important for us to ask, both for our bodies and our souls, is contained in the LORD's Prayer, and we ought to offer it up to God with all possible reverence and attention, and at the same time with confidence, for when we ask, what our blessed LORD himself taught, we cannot doubt but our prayers, as to the substance of them, are agreeable to the will

will of God. From our Lord's parable of the friend and the loaves, we should learn to pray with earnestness and zeal, and not suffer ourselves to be disheartened because our prayers are not answered immediately, or in the very way we desire.

Ver. 14 to 29. It was blasphemy in the Pharisees to attribute to the devil the miracles which our Saviour wrought by the power of God; and it shows us that wicked men defeat the most powerful means provided by God to overcome the hardness of their hearts, and are even more and more confirmed in their wickedness by them. The similitude of the unclean spirit, *ver. 23, &c.* was designed to show what would happen to the Jews who had not improved the advantage of Christ's presence and of his miracles, namely, that they would become more and more obdurate, and bring divine vengeance upon themselves; and this is what happens to all who having received the grace of God resist its motions and continue in a sinful course of life. Observe *ver. 27, 28,* our Lord's answer to the woman who admired his discourses.

Ver. 29 to 37. The queen of the south was the queen of Sheba; see *1 Kings, chap. x.* and consider why she will be more approved at the day of judgment than those who heard our Lord's discourses; and think in what respect our Saviour was greater than Solomon, namely, because our Lord was the SON OF GOD. Recollect that the people of Nineveh were heathens, and that Jonah was a prophet only; see an account of the penitence of the people of Nineveh in the *Book of Jonah, chap. iii.* and remember that we shall be like the people our Lord reprov'd if we do not attend to his divine instructions, because the same things are written for our admonition that were preached to them. What our Lord says, *ver. 33, 34,* of the *candlestick* and of the *eye*, signifies that he had revealed his doctrine to his disciples to the end that they might make it known to the world, but that those to whom it is made known must be willing and ready to receive it, and to put away all false doctrines, or they would not be able to perceive the excellency of this doctrine.

Ver. 37 to 45. This discourse of our Saviour shows us how greatly God abhors pride and hypocrisy, and that those who affect outward purity, and neglect the heart and conscience,
are

are abominable in his sight. Observe, in our Lord's words to the Pharisees, how very wicked the Jewish teachers were at that time. *Ver. 50, 51*, signified that this generation of the Jews would fill up the measure of iniquity by putting him and his apostles to death. The sin of killing good people for righteousness sake began with Cain. For an account of the death of Zecharias the Prophet see *2 Chron. chap. xxiv.*

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe how greatly our Saviour was followed. The leaven of the Pharisees signified their false doctrine. The apostles were warned to avoid this and to preach the truth, as a time would come when they would be called to account for what they preached.

Ver. 4 to 13. Take particular notice of these verses, in which our Lord very clearly settles the distinction between the soul and body, and shows that the soul is immortal, and that the wicked will be finally punished. What our Lord says, *ver. 8, 9*, should lead us to be courageous and sincere in the profession of our holy religion, and to lead good lives. Blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost* signifies ascribing the works of God to the devil, as those wicked Jews did who said our Saviour cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

Ver. 13 to 22. Our LORD refused to decide the dispute betwixt the two brethren, because such affairs were beneath his notice. By *covetousness*, *ver. 15*, we are to understand an immoderate desire for the things of this life. As covetous desires are so apt to occasion quarrels and disputes, and to draw the mind from God and religion, we should use ourselves to reflect on the uncertainty of all earthly possessions, and live like those who have a treasure in heaven; see *Matthew, chap. vi. ver. 19, &c.* what our Saviour says about laying up treasures in heaven.

Ver. 22 to 49. The *little flock*, to whom our LORD addressed his discourse, were those among his hearers who believed in him. What he said respecting *selling all they had*, *ver. 33*, related chiefly to the early times of Christianity, when it was necessary to do so in order to make a common purse;

purse ; but our LORD's admonition concerning *watchfulness*, in the following verses, was designed for all his disciples to the end of the world. To *have their loins girded and their lights burning*, ver. 35, signified to be ready to do their duty. Every body who comes into the world has something to do, and some things committed to his charge, which he will be called to account for. We find from this parable that it is expected we should be kind to all our fellow-creatures. To *be beaten with stripes*, ver. 47, signifies, to be severely punished. We find that all who are negligent will be punished more or less, according to their knowledge of their duty.

Every good Christian may apply to himself our Saviour's comfortable words, *Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* ; and how delightful it is to such persons to think that GOD will not only grant them admission into heaven, but that he will *take pleasure* in doing it ! If circumstances render it necessary, we had much better *sell and give away all our worldly possessions*, than *lose heavenly treasures* for the sake of them ; but this is only required in times of persecution.

Human life is very uncertain, we should therefore keep in a state of *constant watchfulness*, dreading the loss of heavenly treasures much more than any worldly evils. Though our LORD has left the world for a season, he will return and reckon with every servant according to his *deeds*. How soon he may summon each of us to leave this world we cannot possibly tell. It is very dangerous to defer doing our Lord's will to a future time, we should therefore with all diligence discharge the duties of our several callings, that we may, like good servants, who have every thing ready for their master's reception, welcome our blessed Redeemer with joy, and be received by him with kindness.

Ver. 49 to 54. Our Lord's meaning, ver. 49, was that many wicked people would take occasion from his doctrine to hate and persecute one another. Our Lord warned his disciples of all this, that their faith might not be staggered when those things should come to pass, as they did after his ascension.

Ver. 54 to the end. These verses signify that if the Jews had

had attended to the writings of their own prophets they might have known Jesus to be the Messiah by his doctrine and miracles as easily as they could judge of the weather by the appearance of the sky; and Christians may discern in the history of our Lord, as given by the evangelists, that he was the true Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and if they will not believe him to be such they will be punished with the unbelieving Jews at the end of the world. Observe, in this discourse, a great resemblance to part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 11. The Galileans here mentioned are supposed to have been some who refused to submit to the Romans, or pay tribute to Cæsar. Jerusalem was a very large city, and it is likely that there were many in it who were as great sinners as any who were killed by the fall of the *tower of Siloam*; nay, probably it might please God that some good persons whom he saw fit to remove to a better world at that time, might be killed by it.

From our Lord's words, *ver. 3, 5*, we are instructed not to deal out the judgments of God; but to amend our own lives. The parable of the *barren fig tree* should teach us the danger of putting off repentance from year to year, perhaps we may now be in the last *year, month, or day* of our lives; we should therefore repent without delay.

Ver. 11 to 18. The poor woman who went to publick worship while under such an infirmity set a good example, which ought to shame those who stay away from church for every trifling illness. By going thither she obtained a *cure*; and all sincere worshippers may be certain of finding a *cure* also; not indeed for their *bodily diseases*, but for those of the *soul*, they will be absolved from these sins.

Ver. 18 to 23. These two parables signified that though the Gospel was received by very few whilst our Saviour was upon earth, and his kingdom appeared very weak in the beginning, it should be preached in all places and in a very short time, which was fully accomplished.

Ver. 23 to 31. Our Lord's words, *ver. 24*, to those that asked him whether there would be but few people saved, teach

teach us, that instead of putting vain and curious questions concerning things which God has hidden from us, particularly concerning the salvation of others, our care ought to be to secure our own. The Gospel is compared to a straight or narrow gate, *ver. 24*, because it will not admit those into heaven who lead ungodly lives. These are the only people who will be denied admittance into heaven, as we may understand from *ver. 27*. *Ver. 28* signifies that many of the Jews, who called themselves the children of Abraham, would be shut out from heaven, and many of the Gentile nations admitted. By *the first*, *ver. 30*, were meant the Jews, by *the last* the Gentiles.

Ver. 31 to the end. Those who told our LORD that *Herod would kill him*, were desirous of sending him away from the place where he was preaching; but our LORD had no reason to fear Herod, for no man had power to hurt him, unless he delivered himself into his hands; and our LORD knew that it was the will of the Father he should suffer at Jerusalem. The tenderness with which our Saviour lamented the ingratitude and destruction of Jerusalem shows very plainly that no evil befel that nation but what was brought upon it by the people's despising God's goodness and rejecting the offers of his grace.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 7. The miracle here recorded shows that our Lord had power to cure all diseases, and that he was ever ready to relieve the afflicted. From his performing so many cures upon the sabbath day we are instructed that all acts of mercy should be part of the employment of that day, which the Creator has set apart for his own immediate service, for we never imitate the Deity so much as when we are doing good to the souls and bodies of others.

Ver. 7 to 15. This parable was designed to recommend humility and charity; our Saviour exhorts us not to imitate those worldly minded people who only welcome the rich, or their particular friends, and neglect the poor and unfortunate.

Ver. 15 to 25. The parable of the feast signifies that the Jews, and especially the chief among them, would be re-
jected

jected for not accepting the invitation which God made them by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and that the Gentiles should receive those favours which they refused. The parable is also suitable to such Christians as upon slight occasions neglect the offers of divine mercy, and forfeit their right to salvation; and it may be very properly applied to that holy feast, the SACRAMENT of the Lord's Supper, which may justly be called *eating bread in the kingdom of God*. It is very common for Christians to stay from the Sacrament for the slightest reasons. Some are kept away by *fear*, but there is no occasion for any to be afraid to go to the LORD's table, if *they truly repent of their sins, have a lively faith in God's mercy through CHRIST, and are in perfect charity with all men*. Their Saviour will in no wise cast any out because their condition is mean; the poorest person upon earth may be sure of finding a welcome to that heavenly feast.

Ver. 25 to the end. By the parable in these verses our Lord instructed the multitude before they professed themselves his disciples to examine their hearts, and see whether they were firmly resolved to be faithful to him, and whether they were willing to go through all the trials and dangers to which they would for his sake be exposed. A Christian, without true piety and zeal, may justly be compared to salt which has lost its flavour or saltiness.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 11. In the *three parables* contained in this chapter our LORD *spoke* after the manner of men, in order to show the proud Pharisees, that if they even were as righteous as they pretended to be, they should not despise *repentant sinners*. But the Scribes and Pharisees were very far from being *righteous* in the sight of God; they had no faith in the Saviour, and they were very uncharitable to those who were less strict than themselves in the outward forms of religion. The parables of the *lost sheep* and the *piece of money*, show the great care which God takes to bring sinners to repentance, and the delight he has in their conversion. Observe, that those persons are far from having a *heavenly temper*, who are severe against penitent sinners, since even God the FATHER and the *Holy Angels* delight in their conversion. In imitation of God and angels, Christians should do

do all they can to persuade sinners to return to their duty ; and those who are great sinners themselves should make haste to return into the paths of holiness. But we must be careful not to suppose from our LORD's words, *ver. 7 and 10*, that it is best to lead wicked lives, that we may by repentance please GOD better than if we had never sinned ; for as the man who had lost his *sheep*, and the woman who had lost her *piece of money*, had doubtless an equal value for the *rest*, so are all faithful servants highly esteemed in the sight of GOD, though in his great goodness he delights that one who was in danger of eternal death is brought back amongst them.

Ver. 11 to the end. This parable had a double meaning ; in one sense it related to the Jews and Gentiles, and was intended to shew the Jews how very uncharitable and unreasonable they were in taking offence at the Gentiles being called from idolatry into covenant with GOD ; in another sense, the parable relates to mankind in general, and in that light we will now consider it. GOD the Father Almighty is here represented under the similitude of a man who had two sons. By the *elder son* we may understand those who have kept GOD's holy laws ; by the *younger* those who have turned their backs upon religion, and led profligate lives. The first enjoy the constant favour of GOD ; the latter, when they sincerely repent, are kindly received : nay we find that the compassion of our heavenly Father is directed towards them as soon as their hearts are humbled, and they are *desirous* to return into the way of righteousness. From the history of the *prodigal son*, all the children of GOD should learn to keep in their father's house, that is, to walk in GOD's holy will and commandments, as was promised for them when they were taken into GOD's family ; by doing so they will avoid great misery and shame. But if they have unhappily spent their portion of good things in riotous living, and slighted the privileges of the children of GOD, they should, like the *prodigal*, make a resolution to return and humbly confess their transgressions. They may be sure of a kind and gracious reception if their penitence be sincere. And those who are conscious that they have lived as the children of GOD ought to do, should learn from this parable to rejoice that GOD is ready

to receive a penitent child; for God's kindness to repentant sinners will be no injury to the faithful.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 19. The children of this world are those people who attend only to their worldly concerns, without any regard to a future state. The children of light are those who, following the light of the gospel, look for an eternal inheritance in the heavens. The steward who was one of the children of this world, was careful to provide for himself before he was turned out of his stewardship. In this respect he was wiser than many of the children of light. The steward lessened the debts of his lord's debtors that they might receive him into their houses; by this means he provided for himself, so that he might neither be obliged to dig or to beg. Observe, that his lord commended him as one that had done wisely for himself, though he had defrauded his employer, but he could not give him the character of a just steward; and remember that the children of this world are no otherwise wiser than the children of light, than as the former take better care to provide for themselves according to their own principles.

From this parable the children of light should learn to provide against the time when they will be called upon to give an account of their stewardship; but they must remember, that they have a very different LORD to deal with, and very different habitations to seek; they must therefore make a very different use of the mammon of unrighteousness; and they must also remember that they cannot serve two masters; they cannot set their hearts at once on earthly and heavenly riches; they cannot be at once the servants of God and of the devil; neither can they gain a heavenly habitation by unjust and dishonourable practices.

Ver. 19 to the end. Abraham's bosom was an expression in use among the Jews, signifying the paradise of happy spirits in a separate state. It was no sin in the rich man to wear purple and fine linen, for he could afford it; but while he fared sumptuously he should have taken more care of a poor miserable fellow-creature than to let him lie at his gate for the dogs to lick his sores. The rich man appears to have been not only uncharitable, but an unbeliever.

From

From this parable we learn, that a man may be very rich and great in this world, without possessing the favour of God; that there is a future state in which the *wicked* will be punished, and the *good* rewarded. We also learn, that it is impossible for those who are condemned to *hell* ever to get to *heaven*; that those who once get to *heaven* are in no danger of being sent from it, and that it is much better to be prepared for eternity, than to enjoy all the riches, honours, and pleasures, this world can afford. Since we are furnished with the means of knowledge, we should take warning by the fate of the *rich man* in this parable, and believe what *Moses and the prophets*, and other inspired writers have taught concerning the reality of a future state, and be thankful for the light we have in the Word of God, and the help of the Holy Spirit, without desiring more.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. I to II. While there are wicked people in the world there must be offences; but these verses teach us that Christians should be always ready to forgive; that they should have a strong faith, and be obedient in all things to the commands of God; but that they should never value themselves upon their obedience as if they deserved a reward from God; since the best of people fall very short of their duty, and stand in need of forgiveness for the sins they commit. The rewards which God has graciously promised are for Jesus Christ's sake.

Ver. II to 20. The ten poor leprous men here mentioned probably lived together for the sake of company; the sight of so many sufferers must have been very affecting. They had faith in our Saviour so as to believe he could cure them, but *one* only out of the *ten* seems to have thought any farther about him, or the mercy they had received, and that one was of the nation which the Jews held in abhorrence. This circumstance was noticed by our LORD.

By Christ's benevolence to the Samaritan lepers, we are instructed to be kind to strangers, and not to confine our kindness to our relations, friends, and acquaintance; and by his commendation of the Samaritan for returning back to

give thanks, we are taught to *give glory to GOD for the mercies we receive.*

Ver. 20 to the end. Our LORD's answer to the Pharisees showed that his kingdom was not to be an *earthly* but a *spiritual* one, ruling in the hearts of men. Observe, *ver. 23*, that our LORD warned his disciples to beware of impostors, and told them that he should shortly come, but in a very different manner from what the Jews expected, to bring sudden destruction on the enemies of his religion. The predictions in these verses were fulfilled when Jerusalem was afterwards destroyed.

What our LORD said respecting *the suddenness of his coming*, may be applied to the *end of the world*, as well as to the *destruction of Jerusalem*; all that he foretold concerning that event came exactly to pass; and *death and judgment* will come as *suddenly* and as *surely*; we should therefore live so that we may be in a constant state of preparation for that awful day when we shall all rise from the dead, and stand before the LORD, who will come to reward the good and condemn the wicked.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. The design of this parable was to show that fervent prayer will always prevail. To *pray always* and *not to faint*, signifies to be ready to pray at all times. By GOD's *elect* are meant his faithful servants, those who are reckoned inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. If an unjust judge would grant the petition of a person for whom he has no pity, we may be certain that GOD, whose compassion knows no bounds, will avenge the cause of his faithful people who call upon him, though he may not see fit to do it immediately. In order to *pray always*, or to be always in a disposition to pray, we must keep in mind the goodness and mercy of GOD, and our own sinfulness and weakness; and that we may not *faint*, or be disheartened, we must place a firm trust in his divine promises of helping those that call upon him faithfully.

Ver. 9 to 15. The Pharisee in the parable was full of spiritual pride; he thought that because he avoided the sins, and performed the acts he mentioned, he was as holy as he need to be, and he judged uncharitably of his neighbour;
the

the publican had a deep sense of his own unworthiness as a sinner, and had no hopes but in the mercy of God. Observe, that he was *justified* or accepted of God as a just person, in preference to the Pharisee.

As we all stand in need of divine mercy, we should imitate the *humility* of the *publican*, and not, like the proud *Pharisee*, boast of our good deeds to God; for in his sight no man living is justified by his own works; but God will regard the *humble* and *penitent*, as *just persons*, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Neither should we despise others, as the Pharisee did, for this is quite contrary to the spirit of Christianity.

Ver. 15 to 18. Observe, that little children are as much the objects of our Saviour's love and compassion as those of riper years; and from his words, *ver. 16*, we may be certain that in devoting them to God in the Sacrament of Baptism we conform ourselves to what our Lord did on this occasion. From *ver. 17* we learn, that the kingdom of God is reserved for such only as resemble docile children in meekness and willingness to learn their duty, and who receive the Gospel with good dispositions.

Ver. 18 to 31. The sorrow which seized the young ruler, (who was the same we read of in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, chap. xix. and by *St. Mark*, chap. x.) when our Lord required him to sell all and follow him, verifies our Lord's remark, *ver. 24*, that those who have riches commonly set their hearts upon them; from which it appears that if we be not called like the Apostles to forsake all and follow Christ, we ought however to avoid setting our affections upon the things of this life. Observe, *ver. 29, 30*, the rewards which our Saviour promised to those who renounce the love of riches for his sake; and as such great temptations go along with riches, learn if you are in a state of poverty to be contented.

Ver. 31 to 35. Observe, that as the time of our Lord's death drew near he spoke more plainly of it to his Apostles, in order to prepare them to expect it. They did not comprehend his meaning, because they expected his kingdom to be an earthly, not a heavenly one.

Ver. 35 to the end. The Son of David was another name by which the Jews distinguished the Messiah. By curing the blind our Lord not only proved himself to be the Messiah,

but he signified likewise that he had power to cure those who were spiritually blind, if they wished to have their minds enlightened by him.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 11. By the joy which Zaccheus expressed when our LORD declared his intention of going to his house, we may judge that his faith had led him to the place. He was therefore a *true son of Abraham*, not by birth only, but by *faith*; he was one of those *lost sheep of the house of Israel* which our blessed Redeemer came to save. Before Zaccheus became a Christian, he distributed more than half his wealth in acts of charity and justice; and we may conclude, that one of his disposition would have parted with all his possessions for the sake of eternal life. If he had not been such a one, our LORD would not have given him the title of a *son of Abraham*. We see then that it is not *riches themselves*, but *the setting the heart upon them*, and *trusting in them*, that make it so difficult for the rich to become Christians. From our LORD's not reproving Zaccheus for saying, that *he gave half his goods to the poor, and restored fourfold to those who were oppressed*, we learn, that a Christian may defend his own character against slanders, provided he does it with meekness. Zaccheus did not return railing for railing.

Ver. 11 to 28. This parable was designed to show that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual one, that all mankind are to pass through a state of trial, and that afterwards our Lord will come in his glory and call them to an account before they pass into a state of happiness or misery. The *nobleman*, or *prince*, was CHRIST. The *ten servants*, Christians by profession. The *citizens* who sent a message after him, the *Jewish nation*. The *pounds* meant whatever may be used to the glory of GOD, the good of our souls, or the good of our fellow-creatures. We all have some of these. The nobleman's coming to receive the kingdom, signified CHRIST's coming to judge the world. His giving *ten pounds* to one, and *five* to another, shows that every man will be rewarded according to the improvement he has made. Our LORD's reproof of the *slothful servant* shows that it is not enough that we do no wickedness, we must try to do good.

His

His commanding his enemies to be slain, shows that those who set themselves against our Saviour will be destroyed.

Ver. 28 to 41. We have an account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem in the 21st chapter of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and the 11th of *St. Mark*. His riding upon an ass showed that he was the king of Israel prophesied of by *Zechariah*, chap. xiv. ver. 4. Observe, ver. 37, 38, how those who attended him rejoiced, and that they acknowledged him to be the Messiah; and consider what our Saviour has done to redeem mankind and establish his kingdom in the world.

Ver. 41 to 45. Remember, that Jerusalem was the city of God, and that it was to be shortly destroyed for the wickedness of the Jews. Our Lord's weeping over it showed his tender concern for the nation. Observe his words, ver. 42, which show that if the Jews would have attended to the warnings given them by our Lord they would have been happy. When they put him to death, as they were then plotting to do, they brought the threatened ruin upon themselves; and all our Lord foretold concerning Jerusalem came to pass. Every person in a nation should learn from our Saviour's words, ver. 42, to consider the things that belong unto its peace, by which are to be understood in particular keeping up true religion, and leading holy lives, for these bring the blessing of God upon kingdoms and states.

Ver. 45 to the end. Our Lord's driving out the traders from the Temple, teaches us that the house of God is not a place of worldly business, but for sacred uses only; and that therefore when we enter it we should cast out all worldly thoughts and give up our minds to religious exercises.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 9. The question of the Jews did not proceed from a sincere desire to be informed, but from malice; they might easily have known our Lord's authority proceeded from God. The silence of the Pharisees to our Lord's question respecting John showed their hypocrisy.

Ver. 9 to 19. The parable of the *householder* was designed to represent to the Jews their behaviour both under the law and under the gospel. The *vineyard* signifies the church of God, which he first planted in the Jewish nation. His servants

were the *prophets*, his *Son* our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Observe, that the Jews not understanding the parable pronounced sentence against themselves. This prophetic parable was clearly explained after our Lord's resurrection and ascension; by the glory to which he was exalted, by the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles.

Ver. 19 to 27. We should learn from our Lord's words to submit to the authority of the kings and governors we live under, and at the same time to discharge our duty to God who is the supreme governor; *see Matthew, chap. xviii.*

Ver. 27 to 41. Observe, very attentively, what our Lord says in this passage of Scripture which plainly shows there will be a resurrection of the dead, and resolve to prepare for it by leading a holy life, that you may be of the number of those who shall be thought worthy to partake of eternal life and of the resurrection of the just.

Ver. 41 to the end. The Scribes and Pharisees could not answer our Lord's question because they did not believe our Saviour to be the Son of God, or the Messiah; and our Lord would not explain it to them because of their unbelief. What he said against the Pharisees should teach Christians to avoid the crimes of covetousness, pride, and hypocrisy.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 5. The poor widow's mite was more acceptable than the liberal gifts of many of the rich, because she gave it from a principle of true piety and they from ostentation. We may suppose the poor widow had not a family to maintain, for in that case her gift would not have been accepted, as we may know by what our Lord says of such gifts.

Ver. 5 to 25. All which our Lord here foretold concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the signs that would precede it, came to pass at the time and in the manner he foretold, about forty years after our Saviour's crucifixion. Such clear and express predictions as those which have been exactly verified, and are still fulfilling, prove that Christ was the Son of God and that his doctrine was truly divine. Observe, in particular, *ver. 36*, which may be applied to the end of the world.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 7. Recollect what the feast of the passover was kept in remembrance of; *see Exodus, chap. xi. and xiii.* Observe, that it was at the suggestion of Satan Judas conceived the design of betraying his Lord; if he had not before indulged wicked thoughts and covetous desires the devil could not have had this power over him.

Ver. 7 to 21. Our Lord's eating the passover with his disciples shows that he observed to the end of his life all that was prescribed by the Jewish law. The solemn manner in which he instituted the Holy Sacrament, which was designed as a memorial of his passion and death, should teach us to revere this divine institution, and induce us to partake of it frequently and devoutly; *see Matthew, xxvi. Mark, xiv. and 1 Cor. xi. 24.*

Ver. 21 to 24. Observe, that though our Lord gave Judas to understand that he knew of the wicked design he had formed against him, he would not desist, which shows that Satan had taken advantage of his love of money to harden his heart.

Ver. 24 to 31. The lessons of humility which Christ so often gave his apostles, should teach us that the true glory to which Christians should aspire, is that of the kingdom of heaven, which will be bestowed on those who have continued obedient in the midst of the temptations and trials to which they may have been exposed.

Ver. 31 to 39. From our Lord's words, *ver. 31, 32,* it appears that he knew beforehand that Peter would deny him, and that he had prayed for him. Peter did not know himself, he considered not that human nature is in itself weak, and that in the hour of temptation the servants of God have need of the aid of divine grace to support them. Consider that it is very comfortable to know we have a Saviour ready to intercede for us; and we should often pray to Christ to secure us by his grace against our weakness, and support us in such a manner that our faith may not fail. In *ver. 37* our Lord alluded to Isaiah's Prophecy, *chap. liii. ver. 12.*

Ver. 39 to 47. Observe, in this account of our Lord's sufferings in the garden the great sorrow of his soul, his prayers
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to God, and his resignation. The anguish and trouble our Lord endured show that as man he was subject to all the infirmities of human nature. The prospect of his approaching death was very dreadful to him, but his sufferings were very different from those of the wicked. We should learn from this part of our Saviour's history to seek for comfort and strength in the day of affliction by addressing ourselves to God with fervent prayer, and to submit ourselves in all things to the severest trials God shall please to ordain for us. Observe, that though our Lord's disciples certainly ought to have watched with him at such a time, he forgave them, because their fault arose from the weakness of human nature. They were overpowered by sorrow at the thought of losing him shortly.

Ver. 47 to 54. Observe, our Lord's great goodness in performing a miracle for the cure of one of those very people who came to apprehend him. His suffering the Jews to seize him showed that he had fully resolved to give up his life for mankind; they could not have taken him unless he had delivered himself into their hands.

Ver. 54 to 63. Observe here, that Peter soon proved the truth of our Lord's words both by his fall and his repentance. We have in him an instance which shows how easily even good men, when off their guard, may be surprized by temptation. Satan is ever desirous to have them as his servants; but happily they have a powerful friend and protector in the Redeemer of the world. This should teach us not to trust in our own strength.

Ver. 63 to the end. The account of our Lord's examination before the council of the Jews shows that he was not condemned for any crime, and that he was perfectly innocent, for his sentence was only grounded upon what he himself had said that he was the Son of God, the truth of which he had proved both by his doctrine and miracles. Observe, that our Lord submitted willingly to this unrighteous judgment, by which he has given us the most convincing proof of his love, and at the same time an example of zeal and patience which we ought always to set before us. What is related in this chapter is also to be found in *St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. xxvi. St. Mark's, chap. xiv. and St. John's, chap. xviii.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 20. Observe, the injustice and malice of the Jews who, after they had themselves condemned our Lord falsely accused him before Pilate; and in spite of all that Pilate could say to pacify them, were so desirous of our Lord's death that they chose rather to save the life of a murderer and a rebel than his. Our Lord submitted to be sent to Herod that by this means his innocence might the more evidently appear, for this prince could find nothing in him worthy of death. Our Lord did not speak before Herod, because he knew that he questioned him only from vain curiosity, not with a desire of being better informed.

Ver. 20 to 26. Observe, that Pilate was a very unjust judge in condemning our Lord against the conviction of his own conscience. This example shows that it is to no purpose to have a few good thoughts, and a faint desire to do our duty, or even to withstand temptation for a time if we give way at last; for this is an aggravation of our fault. We should upon all occasions act according to our conscience, without suffering any reasons or persuasions to draw us from our duty.

Ver. 26 to 39. From what our Lord said to the women, *ver. 28, &c.* we may perceive that at the very time when the Jews were going to put him to death he was more concerned for the calamities which were coming upon their nation than for his own sufferings. This wonderful example of patience and meekness ought to convince us of the perfect love of Christ, and induce us, in imitation of his example, to pardon and pray for those who use us unjustly. Our Lord's prayer, *ver. 34,* for the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross is a further proof of the charity and goodness of our blessed Redeemer. These ignorant men supposed they were executing a criminal, they knew not that they were crucifying the Lord of life; but they showed their cruelty by insulting and mocking him whilst he was in agony.

Ver. 39 to 46. Observe, our Lord's kindness to the penitent thief, which encourages sinners to call upon CHRIST, in their last moments, if their penitence be sincere; whilst the example of the hardened criminal shows the danger of deferring

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ring repentance till the end of life. Consider that no one can possibly tell what disposition of mind he shall be in at the hour of death. Repentance is seldom a sudden thing; for it consists in a change of mind, which cannot, but through the miraculous power of God, take place in an instant, and sinners have no reason to expect God will work miracles for their conversion. It is likely that the penitent thief had felt sorrow for sin before he came to the cross, and he had probably heard of our Saviour, and believed in him, before he was executed with him. It was certainly a strong proof of faith to believe in Christ as a *King* when he was suffering as a *malefactor*, and the believer was rewarded accordingly. By *paradise* our Lord is supposed to have meant the place of rest and peace provided for the spirits of those who die in the fear of God. The darkness at our Saviour's crucifixion was supernatural; for an eclipse of the sun could not happen at the time the moon was at the full.

Ver. 46 to the end. Our Lord's death and burial are to be considered as the last degree of his humiliation, and the accomplishment of that sacrifice which he offered to God for the sins of the world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 13. The account the Evangelist here gives us of our Lord's appearing to the women, and his other disciples, proves that he is risen, and should powerfully strengthen our faith and hope which are built upon his resurrection.

Ver. 13 to 36. Observe, that the two disciples who were going to Emmaus were not of the number of his apostles, they had heard but an imperfect account of our Lord's resurrection. It was very natural for them to converse on so interesting a subject. Our Lord appeared to them at first as a stranger, in order to show them, before he revealed himself to them, that according to the predictions of the ancient prophets the Messiah was to suffer what Christ had done before he entered into glory. From our Lord's discourse with these disciples, we learn that we ought to study the Scriptures of the Old Testament and compare them with the history of our Saviour, in order to confirm our faith. Whoever will do this with an humble mind and a real desire to know

know the truth, will occasionally feel in some degree as the two disciples felt while our LORD unfolded the prophecies to them. No study in the world can be so delightful as this, and that heart must be dead indeed which does not glow with gratitude and joyful hope at the display of the infinite mercy of God the Father and his beloved Son Jesus Christ, and the prospect of a resurrection from the dead to a life of endless happiness.

Ver. 36 to 50. It certainly must have been a very great surprize to the disciples to see our LORD standing in the midst of them, especially to such as doubted of his being risen. Observe, that by submitting himself to be handled and examined by them, and by eating before them, he convinced them that he was risen with the same body that was nailed to the cross. Our LORD then held the same kind of discourse with them as he had held with the two disciples in their way to Emmaus; and appointed them to bear witness to his having fulfilled all the prophecies. *The promise of the Father, ver. 49,* was the HOLY GHOST. He breathed on them as a token that the HOLY GHOST was to be communicated to them through him; and gave to all his Apostles the same power he had before given to St. Peter, *to remit sins*; or, in other words, to admit them into the Christian covenant by baptism for the remission of sins. This shows that though Peter was to be the first to preach the gospel, he was not to be set up above the rest, as the Roman Catholics teach.

Ver. 50 to the end. The ascension of our Lord ought fully to convince us that he is the Son of God, and as the apostles when they saw him ascend into heaven worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem rejoicing and praising God, we ought also to worship him as our God and Saviour, to obey him, and to rejoice continually while we reflect on the glory to which he is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and firmly hope to be one day received into his glory ourselves. St. Luke's account of our Lord's trial, crucifixion, and resurrection agree with the history of these events given by the other Evangelists; and in the *first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles* he gives a particular account of his ascension,

ST. JOHN.

Sr. JOHN was one of the sons of Zebedee, he is called the beloved disciple of Christ; his Gospel contains several of our Lord's discourses, and many remarkable particulars of his life and sufferings which are not related by the other Evangelists.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe, that JESUS CHRIST is truly GOD, that he was made man, and that he came into the world to save mankind.

Ver. 1 to 4. By the WORD is meant the same divine Being who, in the Old Testament, is called the LORD GOD. We may know that the LORD GOD, and the WORD of whom St. John speaks, mean the same divine Being, because the same acts are ascribed to both. In Genesis he is sometimes called GOD, and sometimes the LORD GOD. It is here said that *the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.* The LORD GOD is described as the Creator in the Book of Genesis; and it is here said that *all things were made by the WORD, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Remember that the LORD GOD, the WORD, and the SON OF GOD, are only different titles for that DIVINE BEING by whom all things were created.

Ver. 4, 5. In the first chapter of Genesis it is said, that GOD *breathed into man the breath of life.* It is here said, that *in the WORD was life*; which proves that the WORD was no other than the LORD GOD. In the Old Testament we read, that the LORD GOD appeared and conversed with men, and taught them to know their Creator, and to serve him. Observe, that it is here said *the WORD was the light of man*; by which is to be understood, that religious knowledge came to mankind through the SON OF GOD: for *light*, in the scripture sense, means *religious knowledge*, and *darkness* signifies *ignorance of religion.*

Ver. 5 to 9. The John, here mentioned, was not the Evangelist of that name, the writer of this Gospel, but *Jahn*
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the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, who was also to bear witness to his being the author of true religion.

Ver. 9 to 15. Observe here, that the light of religious knowledge shined in the world by means of the LORD GOD, from the creation; but a great part of mankind lost the benefit of it, and fell into *darkness*, or ignorance, of true religion, by forsaking the LORD, and following their own imaginations. This was the case with the heathens, who worshipped idols; and this was the case, also, with many who were called the LORD's own people, the Israelites; they turned away from worshipping the LORD and worshipped idols, and their minds were darkened. But there were always some in the world who believed what the WORD revealed, and they were reckoned the *sons* or *children of GOD*. In the beginning of the world, the LORD GOD appeared upon earth in a bright and glorious form, the form of the SON OF GOD. He was seen by Adam and Eve in Paradise; by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by Moses, and many other chosen persons. His glory appeared between the cherubims upon the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and the temple; it was seen in the cloudy pillar, and it was also seen on the top of Mount Sinai, in terrible majesty, when the law was given to Moses. Afterwards the Lord on account of the wickedness of his people withheld his glory, but he then spake to the world by the mouths of the prophets, and they foretold that he would come to redeem mankind. We learn, from the New Testament, that at the very time, and in the manner foretold by the prophets, that the Redeemer *should* come, the LORD GOD laid aside the glory which he had before the world was, and took our nature upon him, and appeared in the likeness of man; or as it is expressed in the *14th verse*, *the WORD was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*; or, in other words, it was plain, from the gracious acts he did, and the divine truths he revealed, that GOD was in CHRIST. Therefore, if we wish to be received as *the children of God*, we must believe that the LORD GOD was really and truly united with Man, in the person of CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

Ver. 15. The WORD, to whom the Baptist bore witness, existed before him, though he was not born into the world

till after his birth, for according to his divine nature the WORD was eternal.

Ver. 16. The meaning of this *verse* is that the WORD was filled with divine wisdom, and eternal life was in him, and these he freely communicated to those who were willing to receive his doctrine.

Ver. 17. The law of Moses related only to the Jews, as the chosen people of GOD, and conveyed temporal blessings alone; but our LORD JESUS CHRIST came as the Mediator of a better covenant than that made with Moses, by which mankind were reconciled to God, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 18. In the *first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews*, which throws great light on this chapter, the SON OF GOD is called *the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person*; and St. John here declares that no man has seen God, that is, God the Father, at any time, but that the Son hath revealed him. We may therefore understand that it was the Son of God who appeared as the Lord God in the first ages of the world, and who afterwards showed forth the glory of the Father in the flesh.

Ver. 19 to 29. Observe, in these *verses*, the great humility, zeal, and faithfulness of the Baptist.

Ver. 29 to 35. By the *Lamb of God*, *ver. 29*, the Baptist certainly meant the Redeemer of the world, who was represented in the Jewish sacrifices by a lamb without blemish; for the Redeemer alone could take away sin by giving up his life for the redemption of mankind. From *ver. 31* it appears that John the Baptist did not know JESUS to be the Messiah till the Holy Spirit descended upon him at his baptism; but by the express declaration of GOD THE FATHER by a voice from heaven, John was convinced and bare record that JESUS was truly the SON OF GOD, and as such we should honour him.

Ver. 35 to 38. Observe, that John the Baptist as a faithful witness, took every opportunity of bearing testimony to JESUS. His disciples were persons who followed him to hear his doctrine.

Ver. 38 to 43. Observe, that as soon as our Lord entered on his ministry he began to choose disciples, because he designed that they should be witnesses of his life and doctrine.

trine. Take notice that Andrew was his first disciple. Our Lord gave Simon the name of *Cephas*, which is the same as *Peter*, and signified a stone or rock; because he knew he would lay the foundation of his church, by being the first to preach the Gospel after his ascension, and that he would do it with firmness and constancy.

Ver. 43 to 51. Nathaniel is supposed to be the same who is usually called Bartholomew. The *Israelite* indeed, *ver. 47*, signified a man of a religious upright character, true and just in his dealings, and ready to acknowledge the Messiah as soon as he should be made known to him. Nathaniel thought that the Messiah was not to come out of Galilee because he could not recollect any prophecy to that effect; but no sooner did he hear our Lord's divine discourse than he gave up his prejudices. Observe, that our LORD knew Simon Peter and Nathaniel before they were introduced to him; and he also knew their characters and dispositions before he had had any intercourse with them; this circumstance shows that our LORD was *more than man*, for no human being can penetrate into the hearts of others, so as to know at once what good or ill qualities they possess.

We should learn from this chapter to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, for we have here the testimony of two persons who could neither be deceived themselves, or deceive others, that he actually was so; *John the Baptist*, who received the divine truths immediately from GOD THE FATHER; and *John the Evangelist*, who was himself an eye witness of the miracles which CHRIST performed to prove that he was the Son of God, and who heard him deliver such doctrines and discourses as could proceed from no other than the divine Word in whom was *the life and the light of men*. From our LORD's commendation of Nathaniel, we learn what qualities our Saviour chiefly expects in his disciples, namely, an upright intention, an aversion to hypocrisy and deceit, and a sincere love for truth and holiness.

CHAPTER II.

In order to prove himself to be the MESSIAH, the SON OF GOD, our LORD wrought many miracles; the first of them was that which is recorded in this chapter.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that our Saviour without going near the waterpots changed the water into good wine in an instant. None but HE, by whom all things were made, could thus change the nature of one of the works of God. By this miracle, therefore, our Saviour proved himself to be the WORD *by whom all things were made*. What our Lord said to his mother, *ver. 4*, signified that she was not to direct him when he was to perform a work by divine power.

Observe, that by going to a marriage feast, and supplying the guests with wine by a miracle, our LORD put honour upon the state of matrimony, showed his own kindness and benevolence, and taught his disciples that they might assemble together upon similar occasions.

Ver. 12 to 18. What is related here is supposed to have happened at a later period of our Lord's ministry; *see Matthew, chap. xxi. Mark, xi. Luke, xix.*

Ver. 18 to 23. Observe, *ver. 18*, that the Jews required some proof of our LORD's authority. His answer, *ver. 19, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up*, alluded to his resurrection from the dead. Our Lord spake in figurative and dark terms, because the time was not yet come for his declaring himself more plainly. These very words were perverted and brought in evidence against him; *see Matthew, chap. xxvi. ver. 61. Mark, xiv. 58.*

Ver. 23. Remember that the Passover* was a great festival among the Jews, kept by the commandment of the LORD, in commemoration of his passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew the first born of Egypt. Our Saviour went up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, because, as the Messiah, he was ordained to fulfil the whole law.

Ver. 24, 25. Observe, attentively, the verses which prove that our Lord was more than man; and they should make us careful to entertain no thoughts or desires but such as are fit to be known by our GOD and SAVIOUR.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1, 2. The sect of the Pharisees was the strictest among the Jews. Nicodemus was one of them, and a member of the great council. He went to our Saviour by night, because he was fearful he should be blamed for going, if it
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was known. *Rabbi* signifies *master*: by calling our LORD *Rabbi*, Nicodemus testified great respect for him. Observe, what he thought of our Saviour.

Ver. 3 to 9. Observe, that Nicodemus was convinced by our LORD's miracles *he was a teacher sent from GOD*; but that was not sufficient. Our LORD solemnly declared, that no one could gain admittance into the kingdom of heaven, *without being born again*; meaning, without doubt that every child of Adam must be *born of GOD*, as St. John expresses it, *chap. i. ver. 13.* He must have a spiritual birth, such as is called, in the Church Catechism, *a new birth unto righteousness*, which makes one who is according to the *flesh*, or the *nature of Adam, born in sin, a child of God*; that is, he has a principle of spiritual life communicated to him. GOD cleanses him from the defilement of original sin by his HOLY SPIRIT, owns him as his child, receives him into his family, and provides *an inheritance for him in the kingdom of heaven*.

Ver. 9 to 14. Observe our LORD's words to Nicodemus, which show that we may believe things we do not fully understand. It is not harder to believe that a man may be born of the Spirit, than it is to believe that the wind blows, for we may see the effects of each; that is, we can see what the wind does, though we cannot see whence it comes or whither it goes; so likewise we may know by good thoughts and good works that the HOLY SPIRIT does communicate itself to the soul, though we cannot tell how, for it is *the work of GOD*. Nicodemus, though a learned doctor of the law, knew not these things, because they had not at that time been revealed to him, neither could any man have discovered them; but our LORD knew them for a certainty, because they were *heavenly things*, and he was in heaven before he came down to earth. Remember, that when we were born again in Baptism, a solemn promise and vow was made on our parts, and if we desire to continue the children of GOD, and to be put in possession of our heavenly inheritance, we must live as becomes the children of GOD, as those who seek for glory and immortality, preferring the interests of our souls, to the satisfying of our bodily appetites.

Ver. 14 to 22. Observe, that in this part of our LORD's discourse, he speaks of what GOD THE FATHER had graciously done for the salvation of mankind, and what the *Messiah*

was to suffer. Recollect for what purpose the brazen serpent was set up in the wilderness, namely, that those who were bit by the fiery serpents, if they looked up to it with faith, that is, believing the promise of God, should be cured of their wounds; *see Numbers, chap. xxi.* In like manner our Saviour said he himself should be lifted up (meaning that he should be crucified); and all who would look up to him as a Saviour, with faith in God's mercy, should be cleansed from sin, and saved from eternal death. Remember, that God, in his infinite mercy sent his only begotten Son into the world, to make atonement for the sins of mankind, by laying down his life, and submitting to the painful and ignominious death of the cross, for their sakes; and that to him we must all look up for salvation; not thinking that we could be saved without him, or supposing that, as sinners, we could be reconciled to God without him; for we are here told, by our Saviour himself, that *he who believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God is condemned.* To believe in the SON OF GOD, signifies not only believing in our minds that God did actually send his Son into the world to lay down his life for mankind, and that JESUS CHRIST is the SON OF GOD; but we must show this faith, by conforming our lives to the doctrine and example of our blessed Redeemer. We must strive to do the will of God, as he has taught and commanded us.

Ver. 22 to the end. Those who followed our Saviour and John the Baptist, to learn their doctrine, were called *disciples*; the word signifies a *scholar*. Observe, what John the Baptist said of our Saviour and of himself. Observe, that John's discourse concerning CHRIST agreed exactly with our Lord's own discourse with Nicodemus. We should therefore consider attentively what the Baptist, who was ordained of God to bear witness to the Messiah, and who was inspired by the Holy Ghost, has declared concerning him, and give that credit to his testimony which is due to divine truths revealed from heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 6. Observe, that our Saviour did not baptize himself, but directed his disciples to do it. The nearest way
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to Galilee from Judea was through the province of Samaria. The Samaritans professed to serve God, and to abhor idols; but there was an inveterate hatred betwixt them and the Jews, on account of the different opinions which each maintained. The Samaritans disbelieved the writings of the prophets, and kept to the books of Moses only; they asserted, that God was to be worshipped in the most solemn manner on Mount Gerizim, as well as at Jerusalem; while the Jews contended that Jerusalem was the only place for the great sacrifices of the law. Both Jews and Samaritans agreed in expecting a Messiah.

Ver. 6 to 31. The well at which our LORD rested was called Jacob's, because it formerly belonged to that patriarch. By *living water*, *ver. 10*, our LORD meant *the principle of spiritual life* proceeding from the SPIRIT OF GOD, which is not natural to man, but was breathed into Adam when he was created in the Image of GOD. This is called in the New Testament *the gift of the HOLY GHOST*. The Jews certainly were better instructed than the Samaritans respecting the worship of GOD, and *salvation was to be of the Jews*, because the Saviour was, according to his human nature, to be of their nation; but neither Jews nor Samaritans at that time knew how to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth*, or according to that spiritual worship which Christ came to teach and establish, nor can any one so worship the Father without the help of the HOLY SPIRIT. Observe, that as the Samaritan woman expressed her belief in the promise of a Messiah, and a desire to be taught by him, our LORD revealed himself to her. In the *14th verse* our LORD says, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life*. All of us thirst for everlasting life; the wisest men that ever lived upon earth could not satisfy themselves that the soul would live for ever in a future state; GOD, by his Holy Spirit, has revealed this great truth, and has caused it to be written in the Scriptures; and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, every sincere Christian feels a comfortable assurance that he shall be saved through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, and thus his thirst after everlasting life and happiness is fully satisfied. But we must remember, that we can no way obtain or keep the heavenly gift but through

Christ; therefore we must pray to God through him daily, to impart and continue to us the gift of the Holy Ghost; and when we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, or for any mercy or favour, we must pray to the Father in spirit and in truth, not with our lips only, but with our hearts, the Spirit of God will then help our infirmities, and will keep up in our minds a constant desire to do the will of God. Our Lord's words, *ver. 34, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*, signified that he had a much stronger desire to do the will of God than to satisfy his bodily appetites. The work which our Saviour, as the Messiah, was appointed to do, was to preach the gospel, to set an example of a holy life, and to die for the sins of the world; and we find that he would on no account neglect this work. We should take example from our blessed LORD, and consider what our heavenly Father requires of us in our respective stations and relations. Whatever is a part of our duty to God or *man*, is *the work of our heavenly Father*.

Ver. 39 to 43. The conversion of the Samaritan woman, and several of the inhabitants of the town of Sychem, shows that the Messiah did not come for the sake of the Jews only, but that other nations likewise were to be admitted to the benefits of his coming into the world. This conversion and the earnestness of the woman to inform her friends and neighbours, that she had found the Messiah, is a lesson to us not only to receive the Gospel with readiness when it is preached to us, but to contribute all in our power towards bringing others to the knowledge and practice of Christianity.

Ver. 43 to the end. The nobleman who came to our LORD was a person belonging to Herod's household, supposed to have been Chuza his steward, whose wife was afterwards a constant follower of our Saviour. Observe, that the curing a person who was at the point of death, without even seeing him, was a wonderful miracle, and proved our Saviour to be truly the SON OF GOD.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 16. Observe, that our Lord went up to Jerusalem at the great festivals; this he did in order to fulfil the law

law of Moses. What is said, *ver. 4*, concerning an angel troubling or moving the water, cannot at this distance of time be understood; but the miracle our LORD wrought is clearly related, and it affords a very convincing proof of his divine power. Observe, *ver. 16*, for what design the Jews asked the impotent man *who had cured him?*

Ver. 17 to 31. Observe, that our LORD's discourse with the Jews, showed that they were greatly mistaken in thinking that acts of mercy were not to be done on the Sabbath day, especially by the SON OF GOD, who, in doing them, acted like GOD THE FATHER, whose providence and mercy are constantly at work. As we are required to imitate God, and follow the example of our Saviour in every thing we can, we should learn, from this chapter, to do *acts of mercy* upon the *Sabbath day*; but we remember that our LORD did not cure the man in the time which was usual for Jewish worshippers to be at their publick devotions; he appears to have been in his way to the temple; and he afterwards met the man in that sacred place, and gave him advice for the good of his soul; and Christians, in general, if they resolve to forsake all worldly pleasures and amusements on the Sabbath day, may find leisure and opportunities for works of mercy, either before or after the hours of publick worship. Pay very particular attention to our LORD's words respecting his *divine nature*, *ver. 23, 26, 27*. As the FATHER loveth the SON, we ought to love him also. As the SON quickeneth whom he will, we should pray to him to quicken, or give spiritual life to us. As the FATHER has committed all judgment to the SON, we should believe that he will be the judge of the quick and dead. And we should honour the SON even as we honour the FATHER, because such is the will of the FATHER; and if we would have everlasting life, we must believe in the SON; that is, we must believe all that CHRIST has here declared of himself. Then we shall be among those who are redeemed from death, and put in the way of salvation, *ver. 28, 29*, and endeavour to prepare yourself for his coming.

Ver. 31 to 39. This part of our Lord's discourse should teach us to consider the proofs that he is really the SON OF GOD, particularly the testimony of John the Baptist, and the miracles which our Lord wrought.

Ver. 39 to the end. All the prophecies of the Old Testament relate to Christ either as the LORD GOD or the Messiah, and they were all fulfilled in him. He was the *seed of the woman*, the *promised seed of the patriarchs*, and the *great prophet* foretold in the writings of Moses; and our LORD's own words agree so exactly with these predictions that whoever believed in Moses could not but believe in him: but the Jews of that day, like many who call themselves Christians in the present times, believed only such parts of the Scripture as agreed with their own opinion, and rejected the rest, and that was the reason they could not understand him to be the Messiah.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 15. This miracle is recorded by the three other Evangelists, but St. John, who was present during the whole transaction, gives us a more particular account by telling us the names of the Apostles with whom our Lord conversed upon the subject of feeding the multitude before he performed it, *ver. 5, 8.* By *that prophet, ver. 14*, the people meant the great Prophet, foretold by Moses, *Deuteronomy, chap. xviii. ver. 15, &c.*

Ver. 15 to 22. Our Lord's kingdom would not suffer the people to make him their king, because his kingdom was not of this world. The miracle of walking upon the sea is related by St. Matthew and St. Mark, by which he proved himself to be truly the SON OF GOD.

Ver. 22 to 37. Observe, how eagerly the people followed our Saviour, and for what purpose they did so. Observe also, our Lord's reproof to them, *ver. 26*, and what he admonished them to do, *ver. 27*, but you must not suppose he meant to teach them that they were not to labour at all for their daily bread, but only that they should not under pretence of religion seek for worldly gains, as gifts gained by hypocrisy will do no one any real good. By *the meat which endureth unto everlasting life*, we may understand the means of eternal salvation. The expression, *Him hath God the Father sealed*, signified that CHRIST, and CHRIST only, was ordained to give salvation to mankind. By *working the work of God, ver. 29*, is meant *fulfilling the will of GOD.* From our Saviour's admonition

monition to those who followed him with the hope of being fed by miracles, we should learn to prefer the life of the soul to that of the body, and not to take up religion for the sake of worldly gain. From his saying, *ver. 29, that this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*, we may understand that *faith in Christ* will be accepted of God instead of that perfect obedience which was required of man in a state of innocence; and we should learn to be thankful to Almighty God for sending his Son into the world to save us, and nourish our souls unto eternal life. Observe, that the people wished to receive *bread from heaven*, as their forefathers had done in the days of Moses. Our LORD called himself *the true bread from heaven*, because through him eternal life was to be given to mankind.

Ver. 37 to 48. Our Lord's gracious promise, *ver. 37*, should encourage us to look up to him as a Saviour ever ready to receive those who believe in him; our Lord came not as man to fulfil his own will, but to fulfil in the *human nature* the whole will of God, that he might make atonement for the sins of mankind, and purchase them for his own by laying down his life for them: this our Lord had resolved to do when he delivered this divine discourse. The Jews murmured because they did not perceive that Christ had a spiritual meaning when he called himself the bread of life which came down from heaven. Our LORD's words, *ver. 44*, signify that no one can become a Christian but by the help of God's HOLY SPIRIT, and by believing what God hath revealed from heaven. To be *taught of God*, signifies, to have divine things revealed from God, and to be assisted by the Holy Spirit in understanding them, as we now have in the Bible. To *come to Christ*, signifies, to look to him as a Saviour.

From our LORD's reproof to the Jews, we should take warning not to doubt his having come down from heaven, because he passed in the world as the Son of Joseph, but, on the contrary, to *let the Father draw us, and to learn of God*; or, in other words, we should desire earnestly to have our understandings opened by the Holy Spirit of God, that we may profit by his written word.

Ver. 48 to the end. Our LORD's words respecting eating his flesh and drinking his blood, related to the HOLY SACRAMENT,

MENT, which he designed to ordain as a means whereby those who should believe in him might commemorate his death and have their souls strengthened and refreshed with spiritual life by the grace of God through Him. We may learn from hence that it is as necessary to our salvation to partake of the Sacrament of *the Lord's Supper*, as of that of *baptism*; and yet there are numbers of persons, who are Christians by profession, that never receive it at all; and others who take it only when they are at the point of death; but if they would properly consider the whole of this divine discourse, they surely would not deprive themselves of such a blessing. Observe, that some of our LORD's disciples took offence at his discourse concerning *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*, because they did not understand the spiritual meaning of it. Peter, on the contrary, believing that *Christ was the Son of the living God*, readily confessed that he *had the words of eternal life*. Our LORD's words, concerning the disciples who *believed not*, and Judas Iscariot, showed that he knew all hearts. Observe the example of Simon Peter. He considered *Christ as the Son of the living God*, and believed every word concerning *eternal life*, though he could no more understand at that time what our Saviour said concerning *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*, than those who went back from CHRIST; but he was fully persuaded in his own mind, that those who leave CHRIST must be in a miserable condition, for they can find no other Saviour.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 14. The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great festivals on which all the males of the house of Israel were required to go to Jerusalem to present themselves before the LORD in the Temple; see *Leviticus, chap. xxiii. ver. 33, &c.* Our Saviour refused to go to Jerusalem at that time that he might not expose himself to the malice of the Jews till the appointed time. Observe, *ver. 7*, for what cause worldly minded people hated our Saviour.

Ver. 14 to 31. Considering our LORD as the *son of Joseph*, it must have been very astonishing to the Jews to hear his discourses; but he declared that his knowledge was not gained in the common way, it proceeded immediately from
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GOD; and he gave them a rule to judge by, namely, his not seeking to exalt himself as the Messiah, but to promote the glory of God upon earth. Our Lord's words, *ver. 17*, are very remarkable, and may be understood as a *promise* that those who are truly desirous of doing the will of GOD, and with that view study the Gospel, shall be made sensible, by the power of GOD on their hearts, that the doctrine of CHRIST is truly divine. Observe, *ver. 18*, what opprobrious words the Jews used to our Saviour. Observe, also, how unwilling they were to believe him to be the Christ. But it plainly appears, from *ver. 30*, that though the Jews had formed a deliberate design to destroy our Saviour, they had no power against him, because he would not give himself up till the time appointed for his making the great sacrifice for sin.

Ver. 31 to 40. Observe, *ver. 31, 32*, how differently our Saviour's doctrine was received by those who loved the truth, and by those who set themselves against our Saviour; the latter could not understand him because they had hardened their hearts. Our Lord, at the appointed time, *left the world* as he said he should do, and he is now in heaven; it will therefore be in vain for any one to seek for him upon earth; but if we *thirst after righteousness*, we may go to him *in spirit*, and he will give us of that *living water* which he offered to the Jews at the feast of Tabernacles; namely, *the Holy Spirit*, to comfort and strengthen us. Well might the officers say, *Never man spake like this man*; for none but CHRIST, who was GOD as well as *man*, could know the things which he knew. The thirst which our Saviour promised, *ver. 37*, to quench was certainly the *thirst after righteousness*. The rivers of living water, signified the gifts of the Holy Spirit which true believers were to receive.

Ver. 40 to the end. Observe that the Pharisees, instead of perceiving that in opposing Christ they opposed God himself, were more and more enraged against him, and even against the people who spake favourably of his doctrine. This is a proof that the most learned and most distinguished in the eye of the world, when they give way to their passion and a high opinion of themselves, are often less disposed than the mean and simple to receive the Gospel. Nicodemus was not one of these; he had quite laid aside his prejudices in consequence of our Lord's discourse with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. The crime which this woman had committed was punished with death by the Jewish law. Instead of taking her to the proper court to be tried for this offence, the Jews brought her to our LORD, hoping he would do something for which they could accuse him. If our LORD had condemned the woman, they would have informed against him to the Roman governor for acting contrary to his authority; if he had *acquitted* her they would have complained to the *rulers of the Jews* for acting contrary to the law of Moses. Our LORD did not see fit to do either, for he did not come into the world to *try causes*, but to *teach righteousness*, and *purchase redemption for mankind*. No method could so well disappoint the malice of his enemies as that which he took. His injunction to the woman, *ver. 11*, shows, that though God is merciful to sinners he does not pardon them but upon condition of their forsaking their sins.

Ver. 12 to 31. Our LORD *bare witness of himself*, by declaring that he was the SON OF GOD, who came to save mankind, and *the Father bare witness to him* by a voice from heaven, and by the miracles which Christ could not have performed if he had not been *one with the FATHER*. The Jews did not understand our LORD's discourse, because they judged according to their own false opinion. They expected that the Messiah would come on earth as a *great prince*: their disposition was *earthly*. Observe, that our LORD told them *they would die in their sins unless they would believe him to be the CHRIST*. He intimated, that had it not been for the hardness and impenitence of their hearts, he would have enlightened their minds with the knowledge of heavenly things. Remember, that though our Saviour is in heaven he still sends this light to the world; it shines in every page of the Gospel, that blessed Gospel from which we may learn what Christ has done for us, and what we must do ourselves; but if we do not believe in our Saviour, we shall not perceive this light, it will be hidden from us as it was from the Jews, the Holy Spirit will be taken away from us, and then our minds will be in spiritual darkness. Consider then the danger of *dying in your sin*, and faithfully believe Christ to be
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the Son of God, and our only Saviour, and remember his gracious words, that *those who follow him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

Ver. 31 to 48. Observe, that they were the unbelieving Jews who replied to our Saviour, *ver. 33.* They were proud of being *the children of Abraham*, but our LORD showed that they were more properly the *children of Satan*, and slaves to sin. None are the children of Abraham in a *spiritual sense* but those who do works proceeding from a true faith, a Abraham did, neither are any others the people of GOD. Take particular notice of our Lord's words, *ver. 34, 42, 44,* and remember that those who set themselves against Christ are reckoned the children of the devil. Consider likewise how happy those are who receive our Lord's doctrine and submit to it.

Ver. 48 to the end. Observe, that when the wicked Jews found they could not deny our LORD's words they called him by bad names. This shows how dangerous it is for people to abandon themselves to their passions and to fall into unbelief. The *death*, which our Saviour said, *ver. 51, those should never see who kept his saying*, was the death of the soul, everlasting misery in hell. His words, *ver. 56, and 58,* show that our Saviour was in being before Abraham, and that he was the LORD GOD who appeared to Moses in the burning bush; the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who when Moses begged to know by *what name he should call him to the Israelites*, said, *I AM THAT I AM: then shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you; see Exodus, chap. iii.* This great name can belong to none but GOD. From our LORD's words, *ver. 56, Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad,* we may understand, either that some particular revelation was made to Abraham before his death concerning Christ, or that he was a living witness at that time in another world of our Saviour's coming to fulfil the promises made to *himself* so long before. If the Jews had properly understood their own Scriptures, they would not have mistaken our Saviour's words. Remember that the doctrine of Christ is certainly not of human invention; it came immediately from GOD the Father to mankind through his only Son our LORD, who,

who, as *Man*, has left us a perfect pattern of every virtue, and that we are under the greatest obligation to obey him as our God and Saviour.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 13. It was a strange question which the disciples asked our Lord, for it is impossible for any one to commit sin before he is born. Our Lord's answer shows that the maladies of the body are not always inflicted as punishments for sin. Observe, *ver. 3*, that this man was born blind in order that God might be glorified, and the Son of God manifested by his receiving sight. The man was sufficiently rewarded for what he had suffered, by having the Son of God and the blessings of salvation revealed to him. Be careful then not to judge any one to be a notorious sinner because he is afflicted with some great calamity. Each man's own conscience will best teach him in what light to consider his affliction; but charity should incline others to suppose they may be sent as trials of virtue: perhaps the man who was born blind might have fallen into a vicious course of life if he had had his eyesight, or he might not have heard of our Saviour. By following our Lord's directions in doing what was so unlikely to restore sight, the man gave a strong proof of his faith.

Ver. 13 to 35. Observe here the malice of the Jews; the further they examined into the affair the plainer it was that a great miracle had been wrought, but they were resolved to regard our blessed Lord in no other light than that of a great sinner, a sabbath breaker, and an enemy to religion. Observe the man's words, *ver. 16, 17, 25, 26, 30 to 34*, which show that he was convinced our Saviour was possessed of divine power. To be cast out of the synagogue, *ver. 35*, was a great punishment, for those who were excommunicated were considered as cut off from the commonwealth of Israel.

Ver. 35 to the end. Observe, that our Lord soon recompensed the man for what he had suffered for his sake by revealing himself to him and receiving him as his disciple. Observe also, *ver. 38*, what the man said and did when he told He himself was the Son of God. Our LORD's words, *ver. 39*, signified that those whose spiritual blindness proceeded

ceeded from ignorance, should be taught to see, or should have their minds enlightened by the HOLY GHOST, while those who were not willing to be instructed by him should be left in their wilful ignorance. The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees was continued as a punishment for their sin.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 19. In the ancient prophecies the church of God is compared to a sheep-fold, over which the ministers are the shepherds or pastors; one great shepherd is spoken of as ruling over them, and who was to come upon earth to gather his flock together when they were scattered abroad through the neglect of the pastors to whose care they were entrusted; *see Isaiah, chap. xl. ver. 11, and Ezekiel, chap. xxxiv. ver. 5 to the end.* These prophecies will help you to understand our Saviour's words. *Ver. 1.* The *door*, signifies the way of admission into the church of God, so as to become one of its members, namely, believe in the LORD GOD the great shepherd of the fold, who alone has authority to open the door or appoint the way by which they must enter. This way now is by the Sacrament of Baptism. The *thieves and robbers, ver. 8,* signified those who set up false religions or corrupted the true. Observe, *ver. 11,* that our Saviour declared himself to be the *good shepherd*, alluding, without doubt, to the prophecies referred to above; and take notice, *ver. 15,* how exactly his words agree with the character given of him by Isaiah. Observe also, *ver. 16,* in which our Lord speaks of *other sheep*, by which were meant those of the Gentile nations who should believe in him. Likewise, *ver. 17 and 18* which show our Lord's great love for his church, and that he willingly undertook to die for the salvation of mankind; and think what a happiness it is to belong to the fold of the *good shepherd* who *has* laid down his life for his sheep, and by so doing has opened the door of the kingdom of heaven for them. But remember that though the door is opened you will not be suffered to enter in unless you follow the good shepherd and obey his voice; that is, willingly keep his commandments and imitate his example, for no others will our Lord own as his sheep at the last day.

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Ver. 20, 21. Observe here the reasonings of the Jews, and consider how wicked those were who would not follow him after hearing his divine discourses and seeing his miracles, and how equally guilty those are who reject our Saviour after reading the Scriptures.

Ver. 22 to the end. It was not because they were willing to receive him as the Messiah that the Jews put the question to our Lord, *ver. 24*, but because they wanted to betray him. Observe his answer, and what he appealed to as proofs of his being the Messiah. Those Jews were not of our Lord's fold because they had hardened their hearts against him and his doctrine: they were some of the false pastors prophesied of by Ezekiel. Observe the mark by which the sheep of the flock are distinguished, namely, by doing what the good shepherd has commanded; and remember that he has commanded Christians to honour their heavenly Father and their Redeemer, to be led by the Spirit, to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and to partake of that of the Lord's Supper. Take notice of our Lord's gracious promise to those who obey him, *ver. 28, 29*, also what he says of himself, *ver. 30*, and observe, *ver. 33*, that the Jews understood our Lord to declare that he was the SON OF GOD when he said, *ver. 30*, I and my Father are one; and that though they accused him of blasphemy he did not say they had mistaken his meaning. Consider that if our Lord had not been the *Son of God* he could not have wrought the miracles he did; therefore we must believe in him as such, or we shall be cast out of his fold.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 18. Lazarus and his two sisters appear to have been very good people from the particular friendship our Lord showed towards them. The circumstances mentioned, *ver. 2*, happened after the raising of Lazarus, *see chap. xii.* Our Lord's answer to his disciples, *ver. 9, 10*, signified that he had no cause to fear being hurt by his enemies during the time that was appointed for his work. *Ver. 15* signified that the death of Lazarus was suffered to take place that it might furnish a proof of our Lord's power to raise the dead. If our

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LORD had been with Lazarus, it is likely that the sisters would have intreated him to cure their brother by a miracle ; or if he had not done so, it might have been said that there was some deceit in the matter, and that Lazarus was not actually dead. But when he had lain *four days* in the grave, and Jesus was at a distance, there could be no suspicion of this kind.

Ver. 18 to 28. Martha's words, *ver. 22, 24*, show that she believed in the resurrection of the dead, and that our Saviour had power to restore her brother to life. Our Lord's divine words, *ver. 25, 26*, signify that our resurrection from the dead is through him and him only ; and that in order to have a blessed resurrection we must believe in him not only as our Redeemer but as the SON OF GOD. Martha, by her answer, *ver. 27*, shows that she understood them in this light.

Ver. 28 to 38. Observe, that Mary as well as Martha expressed great faith in our Saviour's divine power. Our Lord's tears and groans showed how much he felt for them and their departed brother, and that he had the tenderest compassion for the distresses of mankind. Our Saviour certainly could have prevented the death of Lazarus as the Jews said, *ver. 37*, but had he done so the power of the SON OF GOD to raise the dead would not have been manifested in so wonderful a manner.

Ver. 38 to 47. The Jews did not put their dead bodies into coffins, therefore the corpse of Lazarus might be seen as it lay in the grave, when the stone was rolled away, and most likely it was in the state Martha supposed. It was the custom to wrap the body in linen, and to put a napkin on the head ; with these grave-clothes Lazarus could not walk home. Observe, that this astonishing miracle is one of the strongest proofs our Saviour ever gave of his being the SON OF GOD, and by it he confirmed what he declared *ver. 25*.

Ver. 47 to the end. Observe, that the malice of our LORD's enemies, the chief priests and Pharisees, increased more and more ; his miracles, instead of making them believe in him, hardened their hearts, as those wrought by the hand of Moses hardened the heart of Pharaoh. If the Jews would have received Jesus as the Messiah, they would have had no cause to be afraid of the Romans. Caiaphas spake a prophecy,

ver. 49, though he knew it not. Observe, *ver.* 52, for what reason God permitted the Jews to take the resolution of putting Christ to death. Our LORD retired with his disciples, because the time for his suffering was not yet fully come.

This chapter abounds with important instruction. From the sickness and death of Lazarus, and the distress which the loss of so good a brother gave to his sisters, we learn, that the best people must expect to meet with sorrows as well as others, but that these very sorrows will in the end promote the glory of GOD, and the eternal happiness of those who bear them properly. Observe, that no dangers or difficulties could frighten our Lord from pursuing the work appointed for him to do. We should endeavour to follow his blessed example to the utmost of our power, by performing the duties of life with steadiness and courage, whilst we have opportunity; and then when the night of death comes we may close our eyes in peace, with full assurance that our LORD will awake us to eternal life. If we believe our Saviour's words, we shall look up to him for a resurrection from the dead; and the thoughts of this will not only take off the dread of our own death, but they will comfort us also for the loss of our friends, whom we may expect to meet again in a better world, never more to part. Our blessed Redeemer himself wept for the sorrows of his friends, though he was going to remove the cause of their affliction: while they felt grief, he grieved with them. We should imitate him in his tender compassion, and not fly away from scenes of distress, as too many in the world do. Some of those who went to comfort Martha and Mary were converted to the faith of Christ; and without a miracle, those who go to comfort the afflicted, may be the better for it; for nothing is so likely to awaken proper reflections as going to the house of mourning.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe, that Lazarus was restored not only to life but to health. Observe also, that Martha, instead of sitting down with the rest of the guests, waited humbly upon
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our LORD; Mary likewise resolved to give a publick token of her veneration and esteem for him. Three hundred pence, the price at which the ointment was valued, amounted to about nine pounds seven shillings and sixpence of our money. Judas probably took money out of the common purse for his own private uses; he was a covetous man. Mary, without knowing it, was anointing the body of Jesus for his burial; for he was laid in the grave before the perfume of it was gone off. Observe, that though it is impossible for us to imitate Mary in the act she performed, we may imitate her in the reverence she felt for our Saviour; and now that he is removed to heaven, we must regard the poor as his substitutes, or in his place, for he has taught us to consider them as *his brethren*, and to do acts of kindness to them for his sake. The behaviour of the Jews on seeing Lazarus at the feast shows that the nation was at the highest pitch of wickedness, and that there was no more good to be expected from them.

Ver. 12 to 20. St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke have each given an account of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The acclamations of the people who attended him is another proof of his having raised Lazarus; for St. John observes, *ver. 17, 18*, the multitude bore witness to this miracle. Observe, that our Lord was pleased at this time to receive the homage which he had before refused, and suffered himself to be publicly proclaimed as the Messiah; he appeared however on this occasion in great simplicity, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, riding upon an ass, his attendants being none but the common people; but nothing would convince the Pharisees that he was the Messiah though he was continually fulfilling the prophecies.

Ver. 20 to 34. The Greeks, *ver. 20*, are supposed to have been Gentiles who had renounced idolatry, and were therefore permitted to live among the Israelites, but not to eat of the passover. Observe our Lord's answer, *ver. 24*, which signified that he must die before the fruits of his Gospel, the conversion of mankind, would be seen much in the world. *Ver. 27* shows that as *Man* our LORD felt great trouble of mind at the thought of what he had to suffer; and that he was ready to wish to escape all the agonies that

were approaching; but as he knew God would not be glorified nor mankind saved unless he suffered these things willingly, he changed his wish into a prayer. *The prince of this world*, ver. 31, was the devil who was finally to be cast out by our SAVIOUR.

Ver. 34 to 44. Observe, that as our Lord knew the people who questioned him did it with no good design he would not answer them plainly. Had they been *children of light*, that is, believers in what God had revealed to them in the Scriptures; and by our Saviour's preaching and miracles they must have known him to be the *Son of Man*, the *true Messiah*. The prophecy alluded to, ver. 38, is in the 53d chapter of *Isaiah*; that referred to, ver. 40, in the 6th chapter of the same Prophet. The Jews hardened their own hearts in the first instance by resolving not to be convinced that our Saviour was the Messiah let him do what he would; and God punished them by leaving them to follow their own wicked devices, and the delusion of the devil. Observe, that there were some of the Jewish rulers who believed in Christ. In this chapter we have the names of two of them, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Observe, ver. 43, what led the Jewish ruler to reject them.

Ver. 44 to the end. Observe, ver. 44, 45, that our Lord declared himself to be *one with the Father*; and ver. 46, for what purpose he came into the world, namely, to give spiritual light, or the knowledge of divine things, to mankind; also, ver. 47, that he did not come at first to judge the world but to do what was necessary for the salvation of it. Take particular notice of ver. 48, which shows the great danger of rejecting Christ; also of the three last verses which prove that his doctrine was truly divine. Whosoever heard our Lord heard the FATHER, because in respect to his divine nature he and the FATHER are ONE. This we are required to believe though we cannot understand the manner of it, because our Saviour not only declared that *he and the FATHER are ONE*, but wrought many miracles to prove himself to be truly God.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe the ingratitude of Judas in hating his divine master who loved all his Apostles with particular affection. Take notice that the wicked thought of betraying CHRIST was put into the heart of Judas by Satan; but we learn from the foregoing chapter that this traitor was wicked before that; he was a covetous, fordid wretch, as his speech showed when he was angry with Mary for pouring the precious ointment on our LORD's head instead of selling it; *see chap. xii. ver. 4, 5.* If Judas had not been worldly-minded the devil could not have had power over him to lead him into sin. Observe what is said *ver. 3,* also, in the following verses, our Lord's great humility. Peter at first refused to let our Lord wash his feet, because he felt himself unworthy of such an honour. He yielded afterwards to show his love and reverence for his divine master. Observe, *ver. 13, &c.* for what purpose our LORD performed this servile act, namely, to set an example of humility, and show Christians that they should be ready to do good offices for one another.

Ver. 18 to 31. Observe, *ver. 18,* that our Lord knew Judas would betray him. The prophecy he alluded to in this verse is in the *41st Psalm, ver. 9.* Observe, *ver. 21,* what concern he felt for the traitor Judas, and that he gave him intimation of this knowledge, which ought to have checked Judas; and that he showed particular kindness to him by giving him the sop out of his own dish. If Judas had been a good man this would have awakened his gratitude, and then Satan would not have tried to tempt him; but his disposition was bad before, therefore he was easily tempted. Observe, that when our Lord, who knew all hearts, perceived Judas was going out with the purpose of betraying him, he signified by an expression which none but Judas could understand, that he was no stranger to his design; but he did not accuse him openly because he had resolved to suffer for the sins of the world. Observe, *ver. 29,* that though the bag which Judas kept belonged to our Saviour and his Apostles, was not a rich one, part of it was devoted to the relief of the poor.

Ver. 31 to 36. Our LORD's words, *ver. 31, 32*, signified that in all he did he had regard to the glory of God, and that he desired no glory in his human nature but as the Messiah. Observe, *ver. 33*, that his thoughts were directed to heaven. Take particular notice of *34, 35*, our Saviour calls this a *new commandment*, and so it was; for though they might know before that it was their duty to love one another, they had received no commandment from him, their divine master, to *love one another as he had loved them*. Observe, that this love is the distinguishing mark of a disciple of Christ, which should lead all who call themselves Christians to show it upon every occasion.

Ver. 36 to the end. Peter no doubt spake in the sincerity of his heart when he made these professions, for he loved his LORD very much; but he put too great confidence in himself, which laid him open to the temptation of the devil, who is ever upon the watch to betray those into sin who depend upon their own strength and virtue. Observe, *ver. 38*, our Lord's prophecy which should have put Peter on his guard.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 15. It appears from the beginning of this discourse, that the disciples were greatly troubled at our Lord's telling them he should *be betrayed*, and that *he should be with him but a little while*. Observe, in what manner he comforted them. By his *Father's house*, he meant heaven. *Many mansions*, signified many abodes or inheritances. There certainly is a place in the heavenly kingdom for every one who will take the right way to go to it, which is very comfortable to think of. What this way is, our Saviour himself has informed us, *ver. 6*, by which he meant that no one can go to heaven but through him. Observe, *ver. 9*, our Lord's answer to Philip, which shows that Christ is ONE WITH GOD THE FATHER, and TRULY GOD. Observe, *ver. 10*, that our Lord appealed to his miracles as proofs that he is *in the FATHER and the FATHER in him*. If he had not been God he certainly could not have performed the wonderful works he did; we should therefore believe what he says of himself to be true, because he wrought those works. *Ver. 12, 13, 14,*
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are understood to relate to the miracles which the Apostles were afterwards to perform in our Lord's name.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, *ver. 15*, and recollect what our Lord particularly commanded; *see his Sermon on the Mount, Matthew, chap. 5, 6, 7, and the foregoing chapters, ver. 34.* Take particular notice what our Lord promises to do for those who show their love for him, by keeping his commandments; and consider who the *Spirit of Truth* is, namely, the HOLY GHOST: Think what a happiness it is to us that now our Saviour is in heaven we have the HOLY GHOST to comfort us. We cannot see the HOLY GHOST it is true, but we may know there is a HOLY GHOST by the inward strength and comfort we often have in the midst of affliction, when no earthly person or thing could give us comfort; and by the good thoughts we have of God and our duty, and the holy desires we feel for heavenly joys: all these proceed from the HOLY GHOST. Remember our Lord's gracious promise, *ver. 21, 23*, and place your dependence upon them, as what will certainly be fulfilled to every individual Christian who testifies his love for his Saviour by keeping his commandments. *Ver. 26* was fulfilled in an extraordinary manner to the Apostles after our Lord's ascension, and it will be fulfilled to all Christians by bringing to their remembrance what they have learnt from the Scriptures whenever they are particularly called upon to keep any of God's commandments. But in order to *have things to remember* we must first *learn them* by reading and hearing the word of God.

Ver. 27 to the end. The PEACE which our blessed Lord bequeathed to his disciples is that which is called by St. Paul, *Philippians, chap. iv. ver. 7, The peace of God which passeth all understanding*; it was not meant for the Apostles only, but for all good Christians, and it must be felt in order to be known. For instance, if, when we are in deep affliction for any of the great sorrows of life, we find, after praying to God for consolation, a holy confidence arise in our souls that God will turn our present sorrow to our everlasting benefit. That our heavenly Father still loves us though he sees fit to chastise us, and that he will suffer nothing to hurt our eternal interests while we continue to fear and obey him,

and in consequence of these thoughts our minds become quiet and *serene*; this is the *peace of God*. Again, if when we are unhappy under the sense of sin, and are led to humble our souls before God with sincere penitence and hearty purposes of amendment, the same kind of holy confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father gives comfort to the soul, and quiets our fears of the effects of his displeasure, *that is the peace of God*; and it is enjoyed in time of *prosperity* by the good, in the delightful hope that they are in favour with God, that he approves their faith and good works, and will give them an eternal inheritance hereafter. If we consider the value of our Saviour's legacy we shall desire to partake of it in preference to all the treasures of this life; for what are riches, honour, and pleasure, (as they are falsely called) in comparison of that peace which God only can bestow, and which the world cannot take away.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, *ver. 1*, to what our LORD compares GOD the FATHER, HIMSELF, and *his disciples*, which shows the intimate union there is betwixt GOD the FATHER and mankind through the SON. By the *branches that do not bear fruit*, *ver. 2*, our LORD meant those who had been made Christians, but do not lead a Christian life. Observe, that even the branches that do bear fruit require to be purged, that is, cleansed from sin and infirmity, which is the reason that good people often suffer affliction. To *abide in CHRIST*, signifies to keep steadfastly to Christ's religion; those who depart from it cannot bring forth the fruit our LORD requires, nor will they be reckoned as belonging to him. Observe, *ver. 6*, to what a dreadful fate those expose themselves who, having once been Christians, cast off their faith in Christ as the SON OF GOD, the SAVIOUR of the world. *Ver. 7*, a good Christian has what he prays for because he will only pray for the things which are best for his eternal interests, and agreeable to the will of God. Take notice of the expressions of our Lord's love, *ver. 9*, and think what an honour and privilege it is to be so loved by the SAVIOUR of the world; and of the great proof our LORD gave of this love by laying down his life for mankind, *ver. 21*. It must fill every faithful

faithful heart with joy to know what our Lord has revealed in this and the foregoing chapter, and it should lead us to keep firmly to him as *branches to the vine*, till it shall please GOD THE FATHER to transplant us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Observe, *ver. 12*, a repetition of our Saviour's commandment; also, his observation, *ver. 13*, and his gracious promise, *ver. 14, 15*, which though spoken to his Apostles only, was meant for all who should testify their love for him by a zealous discharge of their duty. Consider the astonishing condescension of our SAVIOUR in calling any of the sinful race of Adam *his friends!* and strive to be among the number. What our LORD said, *ver. 16*, is true in respect to every Christian; it is he that chuses *them* not *they* who chuse him; for it is owing to GOD that they are born in a Christian land, or put in the way of knowing the Gospel. The Apostles were ordained ministers of Christ's religion, and it was required of them to *bring forth much fruit*, and they had gifts and graces accordingly; but the meanest Christian may bring forth some fruit. They may do what our Lord enjoins; again, *ver. 17*, and that will lead to many good works. Observe, *ver. 19*, for what reason our LORD says wicked people hate faithful Christians; and should you ever be used ill on account of your religion remember our Lord's words, *ver. 20*. *Ver. 24, 25*, related to the wicked Jews who hated him and his Apostles. The prophecy, *ver. 26*, was fulfilled after our Lord's ascension, when the Apostles were inspired by the HOLY GHOST; *see the Acts of the Apostles*. Observe, *ver. 27*, what the Apostles were to do when the HOLY GHOST came upon them.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 17. Observe, *ver. 1*, that our Lord told his disciples of the heavenly mansions prepared for them, and of the gifts of the Spirit they were to receive, that when persecution came upon them they might not be disheartened; but it appears, from *ver. 6*, that their hearts were filled with sorrow, therefore he gave them fresh promises of comfort, and informed them, *ver. 8, &c.* for what purpose he was to come to them as his ministers, namely, that through the HOLY GHOST they might be able to reprove the world for sin, preach
righteousness,

righteousness, and oppose the devil. These verses related chiefly to the Apostles.

Ver. 17 to the end. This part of our Lord's discourse was also designed chiefly for his Apostles. Observe particularly what he says of himself, *ver. 28*, also *ver. 29*, which show that our Lord's disciples understood his words in a plain literal sense. The prediction, *ver. 32*, was fulfilled when our Lord was apprehended, and all his disciples forsook him and fled. Observe also, our Lord's comfortable words, *ver. 33*, *In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, which every Christian in time of trouble and affliction may apply to himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 9. This chapter contains our LORD's solemn prayer with which he ended his ministry. In the beginning he prayed for *himself*; and we may learn from it, that he had always had the glory of his heavenly Father in view, and the fulfilling the divine purpose for which he came into the world. It also reveals to us, that our LORD had eternal glory with GOD THE FATHER before the foundation of the world. By *the hour that was come*, our LORD meant the time of his suffering.

Ver. 9 to 20. In these verses our LORD prays for his apostles. The *son of perdition*, *ver. 12*, was Judas Iscariot. Our LORD knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him, yet he admitted him into his society, because it was the will of the Father that he should suffer death upon the cross. But you must be careful to remark, that it was *Satan*, not GOD, who put the wicked design into the heart of Judas. If it had been the will of the Father that Christ should *not die*, Judas would have been hindered from putting his design in execution; but his *wicked intention* would have been the same. Judas designed to injure Christ, and GOD made him instrumental to his exaltation; for if Christ had not died and risen again, he would not have ascended into heaven. Our Lord's words, *ver. 17*, *Sanctify them through thy truth*, signified, make them, by the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, holy persons, and set them apart for the ministry of the Gospel.

Ver.

Ver. 20 to the end. The concluding part of this solemn prayer was for all our LORD's faithful followers to the end of the world. To be *one with GOD the FATHER and with GOD the SON*, *ver. 21*, must signify, to have the HOLY SPIRIT imparted to them. This was the glory which our Saviour gave to all his faithful disciples, to be united with GOD by means of the HOLY SPIRIT, which is given by the FATHER through the SON. But besides this those who continue in union with GOD upon earth, those who live according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit, will partake of heavenly glory with Christ, and in that heavenly state they will see their blessed and adorable Saviour in his glory as the SON OF GOD. Observe, that in this most excellent prayer, which our LORD offered up in the presence of his apostles, he asserted his own *divinity* in the strongest manner; we should therefore believe that he certainly had, as the SON OF GOD, a glory with the FATHER before the world was, which glory he laid aside, in order to redeem mankind; and we should honour and reverence him in our hearts, and be thankful for this astonishing instance of his love for sinners. Remember that by his petitions in behalf of his Apostles, our LORD at once expressed his own good-will to them, and taught them what blessings to pray for. To his followers in general our LORD by this prayer taught that they should pray to be united with GOD THE FATHER and HIMSELF, by the HOLY SPIRIT, and to be received after death into his heavenly kingdom. As it is our duty to imitate our Saviour in every thing we can, we should strive to glorify GOD by our words and actions. Our Saviour, as Man, certainly had a will of his own, but he never yielded to it; he was constantly led by the HOLY SPIRIT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 11. It is probable Judas took the opportunity of slipping away to the high priests when our LORD retired with his three disciples to Gethsemane, which was the garden mentioned, *ver. 1*. Our LORD knew perfectly well that the traitor Judas was coming with a band of armed men to take him, yet he went forth to meet them, being resolved patiently to endure all the evils which were coming upon him, and
to

to submit willingly to suffer death upon the cross for the salvation of mankind. Till he should resign himself into their hands, his enemies had no power to touch him, as appears from *ver. 6*; and before he would do so, he required that they should not molest his disciples. *Ver. 8.* The moon was at this time near the full; but they brought lanterns and torches, that they might search about in case our LORD should have endeavoured to conceal himself, and that they might manage their arms if they should have occasion to use them. Peter was very rash in drawing his sword at such a time; but we are told by St. Luke, *chap. xxii. ver. 51*, that our Saviour healed the man by a miracle, whose ear Peter had cut off; and it is probable he did this as the man was going to seize him.

Ver. 11 to 28. Observe, that though it was the dead of the night, the high priests and elders of the Jews assembled together in council; so eager were they to have Jesus brought before them. Observe, *ver. 15, &c.* that Peter soon fulfilled his Lord's words, *chap. xiii. ver. 38*, when called suddenly to the trial; not having any distrust of himself, he fell into the snare Satan set for him; but our Lord knew he loved him in his heart, and that a look from him would awaken him to repentance. This look he gave him, and Peter remembered the words of the LORD, and he went out and wept bitterly; see *Luke, chap. xxii. ver. 61. Matthew, xxvi. 67.*

Ver. 28 to the end. Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest, but as Judea was a Roman province the Jews could not put any one to death; therefore they carried Jesus very early in the morning before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, to whom they accused him of a design of setting up a new kingdom in opposition to the Romans, because our Lord had revealed himself to them as the Messiah, and proved himself to be so by fulfilling all that their own prophets had foretold of him in the Scriptures, which they professed to believe. The name of the Roman Emperor who reigned at that time was Tiberius Cæsar; he was a man of a very jealous temper, and very tyrannical, therefore, when the Jews said, *ver. 12, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend, &c.* Pilate resolved for his own sake to pass sentence upon Jesus, which showed him to be a very unjust judge. Observe, that when the Jews said,

ver.

ver. 15, we have no king but *Cæsar*, and condemned the Messiah to death, they, in fact, refused to be any longer the *people of God*. Pilate desired the Jews to try Jesus themselves, *ver. 31*, because he thought our LORD had only committed some transgression against the Jewish law, of which he did not pretend to judge. By putting him into the hands of the Romans, whose custom it was to *crucify*, the Jews fulfilled those prophecies our Saviour had spoken concerning the manner of his death. Our LORD's answer to Pilate, *ver. 36*, showed that his kingdom was a spiritual one, very different from *Cæsar's*. Observe, that even the chief priests and rulers preferred an infamous robber and murderer to our blessed LORD, who, even as a *member of society*, so far from doing injuries, was constantly employed in doing good to mankind; but when we view him as the *true Messiah*, the SON OF GOD, the presumption of the Jews in persecuting him appears great beyond example. As for the multitude, it is likely they cried out just as their rulers directed them, without thought or reflection; but it was a great crime in them to do so, and heavy judgments were afterwards sent upon them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 19. Pilate perhaps hoped to pacify the Jews by inflicting a slighter punishment upon our LORD, when he ordered him to be scourged; but if he had been an upright judge, he would have released him at once, and have severely reprimanded his persecutors. Observe, *ver. 5*, that to show he had been punished, Pilate brought Jesus forth, and once more declared his innocence. But nothing less than *crucifixion* would satisfy his enemies. Observe, that when Pilate heard Christ had called himself the SON OF GOD, he was the more afraid; thinking, perhaps, that he was one of the gods, of which the heathens supposed there were many, he therefore questioned him again; but received no answer. The judge who could condemn the innocent was not worthy that the SON OF GOD should reveal himself to him; yet those who delivered him into the hands of Pilate were guilty of a greater sin than he.

Ver. 19 to 28. Observe, that it was not out of respect to our

our Saviour Pilate insisted upon giving him the title of THE KING OF THE JEWS, but because it was the will of God he should do so. The words were put into his mouth by the Holy Spirit, as those were which the false prophet Balaam spake in favour of Israel when he wished to curse them. From the account we have of Pilate's conduct we should learn how dangerous it is to act against our own conscience, or to yield to the persuasions of wicked men in a single instance. Through his want of resolution at first, he went on from one step to another, till at last he condemned the innocent to death, which is the greatest crime a judge can be guilty of. The behaviour of the Jews, who could not be softened either by the remonstrances of Pilate or by the sufferings of CHRIST, but persisted in desiring that he might be crucified, shows, that when men abandon themselves to their passions, there is no act so wicked that they will not commit; and the behaviour of the multitude who joined in crying out, *Away with him, crucify him*, shows, that when ignorant people join a mob, they may be led into the worst of crimes before they are aware of it; and it should serve as a warning to all persons who are not qualified to judge for themselves, never to be led on to riot and mischief by the persuasion of their superiors in rank or learning.

Ver. 23 to 28. The behaviour of the Roman soldiers, in dividing our Lord's garments whilst he was hanging in agonies on the cross, showed that they were very unfeeling. Observe, *ver. 23, 24*, the fulfilment of a prophecy in the *22d Psalm*. Observe, *ver. 25*, that the words of Simeon to the Virgin Mary, *Luke, chap. ii. ver. 34, A sword shall pierce through thine own soul*, were fulfilled, when she saw her dear Son, on whom she had placed such hopes, hanging like a criminal upon the cross. Our LORD's attention to his mother at such a time proved, that he loved her as a parent; it also showed that his mind was composed in the midst of his agonies, which must have been dreadful. St. John was the disciple who took our Lord's mother to his own house. Joseph, her husband, we may conclude was dead; but they knew nothing of the Messiah.

Ver. 28 to 31. Remember that every particular of our LORD's sufferings, from the beginning of his life to the end

of it, was foretold by some or other of the prophets, or by himself. The 53d chapter of *Isaiah* plainly relates to them; and the 22d *Psalms*. The last prophecy our Lord had to fulfil was that *gall and vinegar should be given him to drink*, therefore, he said, *ver. 30, It is finished*. Observe, that having done all that the prophets foretold, our LORD bowed his head, in token that he died willingly, and gave up the ghost, or spirit. Recollect what our Lord said, *chap. x. ver. 18*, concerning his life. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*

Ver. 31 to 38. It was the custom of the Romans to let the bodies remain on the crosses till the fowls of the air devoured them, and it was usual to set a guard to prevent the friends from stealing the bodies to bury them. On the contrary, the Jewish law ordained, that whoever was sentenced to die, should be buried on the day of their execution. The preparation-day, *ver. 31*, was the day before the sabbath. The Jews desired the legs of those who were crucified might be broken, in order to hasten their deaths. Remember that the *pascal lamb*, the lamb killed for the passover, was ordained to represent the Redeemer who was to die for the sins of the world. According to the law of Moses, when this lamb was killed, not a bone of it was to be broken; see *Exodus, chap. xii. ver. 46*. And the holy Psalmist said of the Messiah *He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken, Psalm xxxiv. ver. 20*. We here see how these things were fulfilled. The blood and water which issued out of his side, showed that our LORD was actually dead. The person who bare record, *ver. 35*, was St. John, who wrote this Gospel.

Ver. 38 to the end. Observe the courage of Joseph of Arimathea who, though the Jewish rulers had condemned Christ to death, was not afraid to testify his respect for him by begging his body and placing it in his own sepulchre. Nicodemus also, who had been so fearful on a former occasion, was now ready to run all hazard to pay the last earthly honours to the Messiah he believed in. By interring our Lord in this honourable manner Joseph and Nicodemus fulfilled a part of *Isaiah's* prophecy, *And he made his grave with*

the wicked, and with the rich in his death. Isaiah, chap. liii. ver. 9.

From the example of these good men we should learn let our condition in life be ever so great, not to despise the cross of Christ, but to think of a crucified Saviour with the utmost love and reverence. St. Matthew relates that the Jewish rulers sealed the sepulchre and set a watch, that is, a guard of soldiers, to see that the body was not stolen.]

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, that many proofs were given of our LORD's having risen from the dead. Peter saw the linen clothes lying, and the napkin that was about his head; these things a dead body could not have taken off, and if any people had passed the guards, broke the seals, and stolen the body, they would surely have staid to put things in such order. The *other disciple*, *ver. 8*, was St. John. Observe, that this Evangelist wrote what he saw himself. Mary was overcome with grief, not knowing how the precious remains of her beloved LORD, which she had intended to embalm, might be treated by his enemies. When Jesus first spake to Mary, her back was towards him; but when she fixed her eyes on him, she was convinced it was Christ himself. Mary probably would have embraced our LORD's feet, after her former manner, but he would not suffer her to do this, because she would have frequent opportunities of showing her respect for him. It certainly must have been a very great surprise to the disciples to see our LORD standing in the midst of them, especially to such as doubted of his being risen. By submitting himself to be handled and examined by them, and by eating before them, he convinced them that he was risen with the same body that was nailed to the cross. He breathed on them as a token that the HOLY GHOST was to be communicated to them through him; and gave to all his apostles the same power he had before given to St. Peter, *to remit sins*; or, in other words, to admit them into the Christian covenant by baptism for the remission of sins. This shows that though Peter was to be the first to preach the Gospel, he was not to be set up above the rest, as the Roman Catholics teach.

Ver.

Ver. 19 to the end. Thomas, it seems, was not in the room when our LORD first appeared to his disciples, but, as he was one of those who were to bear witness to our LORD's life, death, and resurrection, it was proper he should have the same knowledge of them as the rest. Observe, that though he had been unbelieving at first, he professed a true and full faith afterwards; and whoever attentively considers all the circumstances of our LORD's rising from the dead, must be convinced that he had a divine as well as human nature, and will be ready to say, as Thomas did, *My LORD and my GOD*. The last verse of this chapter tells us, in a few words, the design and use of writing the Gospels. Observe, that as Christians, our having eternal life and happiness, depends upon a true faith in CHRIST, such as the Gospel of St. John teaches.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 15. It is not certain whether this appearance of our LORD was before he showed himself upon the mountain in Galilee, or after it. But observe, that our LORD appeared to his apostles, and assisted them by his power while they were engaged in their worldly business. Our LORD's appearance to his disciples was very seasonable. This circumstance should teach us to hope in the midst of disappointment. Our LORD was taken by his disciples for a stranger; from hence we learn that our Saviour may be near to us when we think ourselves forgotten by him. Our LORD asked his disciples *if they had any meat*, to encourage them to make their wants known, and he prepared refreshment for them to show his compassion; by which he instructed his followers to seek out modest people who are in want, and to relieve them.

Ver. 15 to the end. Our LORD's question to Peter, *ver. 15*, must have brought to mind his former professions, from which he had so shamefully deserted by denying his Master; and Peter's answer shows, that he was humbled and improved. Observe, that he appealed to our LORD's knowledge of the sincere affection of his heart, but made no violent professions. To show he was perfectly reconciled to him, our LORD gave Peter a charge to instruct his flock, meaning the mem-

bers of his church ; by which he restored him to his apostolic office, which he had forfeited by denying him. Our Lord's words, *ver.* 18, signified that Peter would be called to suffer martyrdom, and that he would be crucified. Observe, that our Lord exhorted him to follow his own blessed example. This Peter was now ready to do, and he continued steadfast to the last. Peter was curious to know whether John would also die a martyr ; but as this did not immediately concern Peter, our LORD did not see fit to satisfy his curiosity. The conjecture that John would never die was founded upon a mistake, for our LORD's answer to Peter really conveyed no such meaning ; but St. John lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and the ruin of the Jewish state, which was first meant by our Lord's *coming* after his ascension. Observe, that in our LORD's behaviour to Peter we have a representation of the goodness of GOD to penitent sinners, and an example to behave with meekness towards those who are sorry for having injured us. In his great love for his divine Master, which he afterwards proved by enduring persecution, and by going to prison, and even to death, for his sake, Peter set an example to all Christians, but particularly to those who live in time of persecution. Our LORD's answer to Peter's question concerning St. John should teach us not to amuse ourselves with curious inquiries into things which do not concern us, but to *follow our Saviour*, that is, to imitate his blessed example to the best of our power. And St. John's solemn attestation, that what he wrote *he knew to be strictly true*, should confirm our faith in CHRIST JESUS our Saviour, not only as the MESSIAH, but as the WORD, the SON OF GOD.

This chapter is the conclusion of St. John's Gospel. No one was so well acquainted with our LORD's life and discourses as this beloved disciple ; and he here solemnly declares, that all he had written concerning them was true. But he did not undertake to give an account of all that our LORD had done, as the WORD and the MESSIAH, for this would have been a work too great for all the human race together.

ACTS.

THIS book is supposed to have been written by St. Luke, as a continuation of the history of our Saviour's life and doctrines, and in order to show that the Christian religion prevailed and was established after our Lord's ascension, first at Jerusalem, and afterwards in other places, by the preaching of the Apostles, and chiefly by the ministry of St. Peter and St. Paul.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 9. Theophilus, to whom St. Luke addressed this book, was most probably the same person to whom he addressed his Gospel, at the latter end of which he informed him of our LORD's ascension, and he here relates some further particulars of this wonderful event. Our Lord's *passion*, *ver. 2*, meant his sufferings from his agony in the garden to the time of his expiring on the cross. *Infallible proofs*, *ver. 3*, meant proofs which could not be denied or mistaken. Observe what things our LORD talked about to his disciples during the forty days he was upon earth after his ascension. *Ver. 4*, the disciples were to stay at Jerusalem for the *promise of the Father*, by which was meant the sending the HOLY GHOST upon them: see this promise in *St. John's Gospel*, *chap. xiv. ver. 26*. It was to be fulfilled in Jerusalem, because the Gospel was to go forth from thence to be preached in the whole world, Jerusalem being the holy city in which the glory of the LORD had been so frequently displayed. *Ver. 5* shows that *John's baptism* was not the Christian Sacrament: the Apostles were not only to be baptized with water but with the HOLY GHOST; that is, to have the *gift of the Holy Spirit* to enable them to do their duty in that state wherein their divine master placed them when he made them ministers of the Gospel, and commanded them to *Go and baptize all nations*; see *Matthew*, *chap. xxviii. ver. 19*. The Apostles supposed that the kingdom of the Messiah, which before our LORD's crucifixion they had so earnestly looked for, was now going to begin. Observe, our LORD

did not satisfy their curiosity ; all that was necessary for them to know at that time was, that they should receive power to perform what would be required of them.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe, that it was fit and proper our LORD should ascend to heaven, as there were so many ages to come before the end of the world ; and it was also proper that his disciples should see him ascend, to confirm their faith, and that they might bear witness to the truth of it. To heaven, accordingly, our blessed LORD ascended, as our KING, that he might subdue his enemies, and protect his subjects ; and as our MEDIATOR, that he might enter into the presence of GOD THE FATHER to intercede for us. He also went, as he before declared, *John, chap. xiv. ver. 3*, to prepare a place for his faithful followers, whom he had chosen to be witnesses of his life and doctrine. The Apostles continued to look after our LORD when he was out of sight, hoping, perhaps, that he would return, or that the clouds would open, and they should have a view of him in his heavenly state ; he therefore kindly sent two ministering angels to reconcile them to the loss of him, and to confirm what he had before told them concerning his second coming. Observe, that we have here, and in the writings of the Evangelists, the most convincing proofs of the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, of his ascension, and of the certainty of his second coming to judge the world ; these truths being attested by the Apostles, and by angels. His ascension ought to convince us that he has a sovereign authority over all things, and that his kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. It should likewise raise our thoughts and our desires towards heaven, that glorious place where our LORD is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and where he prepares for his faithful people an eternal inheritance ; and it should engage us to live in a constant practice of holiness, that we may be prepared for his coming again to receive us into everlasting habitations.

Ver. 12 to 15. Observe, that the Apostles obeyed their LORD's commands, by going back to Jerusalem. *A sabbath day's journey, ver. 12*, was about a mile. Our Lord's mother and the other pious people, whose hearts were lately filled with sorrow, now experienced the highest joy, which they expressed in praising and blessing God : by doing so, they

they left an example to all Christians to assemble for prayer. At first the Christians were obliged to meet privately in *rooms*, because there were no churches for them; but when Christianity was fully established, churches were built for them, as the Temple and synagogues had been before the coming of Christ for GOD's chosen people, the Jews, and then it was proper to assemble in them. Observe, that Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned as having been among the number of those who assembled together with the Apostles, but not in a manner to give us any reason to think she should be worshipped, as the Roman Catholic religion teaches; for that is gross idolatry.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that as our Lord had chosen *twelve Apostles*, the first care of Peter and his companions after his ascension was to appoint an Apostle in the room of the traitor Judas, and they made choice of two men, who had been witnesses of the life and resurrection of our Saviour; but they cast lots and prayed to the Lord, because the Apostles were to be chosen immediately by CHRIST himself. Observe, *ver. 18*, the dreadful end of the traitor Judas.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 14. The day of *Pentecost* was the next great festival to the Passover; it was kept in remembrance of the Lord's giving the law from Mount Sinai. The feast of Pentecost was celebrated in the midst of summer which brought great numbers of people to Jerusalem. Those *who were with one accord in one place, ver. 1*, most probably were the hundred and twenty mentioned in the last chapter. The *sound as of a rushing mighty wind, ver. 2*, was a proper symbol of the HOLY SPIRIT, and agreed with our Saviour's discourse with Nicodemus, *John, chap. iii. ver. 8*. The *cloven or divided tongues, ver. 3*, were symbols of the gift of speaking divers languages, with which the Apostles and first disciples were suddenly endued, in order to render them capable of preaching the Gospel to all nations. Observe, that as the *division of tongues* at Babel introduced confusion, and was the means of casting off the Gentiles, or those who forsook the worship of the true GOD, and of keeping them from the knowledge of him; so there was a remedy provided by *the*

gift of tongues at Jerusalem, to bring the Gentiles out of darkness into light. The *wonderful things*, of which the Apostles spake, *ver. 11*, we may conclude related to Christ and the Gospel. There were usually at Jerusalem great numbers of people from different parts, who did not constantly reside there. As the Apostles were to teach the Gospel to others, they were inspired with the knowledge of it in an extraordinary manner, and spake as the HOLY GHOST inspired; and as they were to teach all nations, it was requisite for them to be able to speak all languages. Observe, *ver. 9, 10*, what a number of different languages they were immediately able to preach in. When this gift was bestowed they were no longer *unlearned men*; they could speak all languages. Remember this that you may not be led away after *unlearned men*, who often pretend to be inspired to preach the Gospel without being able to do it properly, even in their own native tongue. It is an affront to the HOLY SPIRIT to listen to such preachers. Observe, what some of the unbelieving Jews said, *ver. 13*. This could not be true, for how could drunken men speak languages they had never learnt; neither would such people have talked of the wonderful works of God: besides this, on solemn festivals, the Jews used to fast till after the hour of sacrifice. Take particular notice of Peter's discourse, and observe with what boldness he began to preach the Gospel when he had received the gift of the HOLY GHOST, and compare this with his behaviour when he denied Christ. Remember also, that when our Lord first called him he gave him the name of Peter, which signifies a *stone* or *rock*; see *John, chap. i. ver. 3*; and that he afterwards said to him *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, Matthew, chap. xvi. ver. 18*. The prophecy of Joel alluded to in the *17th and following verses* is in the *2d chapter of Joel*. It related to the LORD's sending the HOLY GHOST at the first preaching of the Gospel, but it will have a further fulfilment at our Lord's second coming.

Ver. 22 to 37. Observe Peter's words which contain the promulgation or first preaching of the Gospel, after the ascension of our Saviour, and remark how the promise of the *Father* was fulfilled both to the Apostles themselves and to
their

their hearers. Observe that though in *ver. 22* Peter called CHRIST a man, he spake of him, *ver. 25*, as the LORD and the HOLY ONE. The first prophecy he alluded to is in the *16th Psalm*; the other in the *132d Psalm*, also *Psalms 110th*.

Ver. 37 to 41. Observe, that Peter's reasoning by the help of the Holy Spirit, found its way to the hearts of many of his hearers, and they had faith; they believed that JESUS, who had been crucified, was risen from the dead, that he was both LORD and CHRIST, and they were desirous to become Christians. Observe, *ver. 38, 40*, what Peter directed them to do in order to their being admitted into the fellowship of CHRIST's religion. The untoward generation, from whom he advised them to save themselves by repentance and baptism, were the unbelieving Jews. Observe his words, *ver. 39*.

Ver. 41 to the end. By the Church is to be understood, the society of Christians. By the Apostle's doctrine, *ver. 42*, is meant the Gospel which they preached concerning the remission of sins, and salvation through JESUS CHRIST, the SON OF GOD, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was to be given to all who were baptized in his name. The fellowship of the Apostles, signified belonging to the society of Christians, and joining with the Apostles in breaking of bread, or receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in prayers offered up in the name of JESUS CHRIST. Our Saviour commanded his Apostles, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another; see *Matthew, x. ver. 23*: they were not to court persecution. It is said here, *ver. 47*, that the LORD added to the church daily, such as should be saved; these, doubtless, were the persons who saved themselves from that untoward generation, by repenting of their sins, and being baptized. By the LORD's adding them to the church, we may understand, that he bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Observe, that though they could not be saved without CHRIST, they were required to do something, namely, to repent. Give these verses very particular attention, for they show what THE GOSPEL is which the Apostles were commanded to preach to all nations, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. The Gospel, or good tidings, preached first

by CHRIST, and, after his ascension, by the Apostles, is plainly this: that CHRIST died for the sins of mankind; that he rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of GOD; and that he will send the HOLY GHOST to all who truly repent of their sins, and are baptized in his holy name. The gift of the HOLY GHOST consists in the secret working of the HOLY SPIRIT, which, in a manner, beyond what we can conceive, gives *spiritual life* and *holiness* to the soul, and improves the understanding in divine things. The HOLY SPIRIT also inspires good thoughts and desires, and enables those, in whom he works, to do their duty in their respective stations, whatever they may be; to bear with patience all the afflictions and sufferings of this mortal life; and to trust in GOD's promises for an eternal reward. Make a resolution then to *continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship*, that is, in believing the Gospel, and leading the life of a Christian; partake frequently of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and attend with true devotion at publick worship, and you may be sure that the *gift of the HOLY GHOST* will remain with you, and while it does so you will be in the way of salvation. These things every Christian may and ought to do; and every action of our lives should be marked with *singleness of heart*; whatever is done to gain the praise of men is contrary to Christianity; but those who act uprightly will always be in favour with good people, and what is far better with God himself.

CHAPTER III.

The cure of the lame man showed, that presently after the ascension of our LORD, the Apostles were enabled to work miracles in order to prove that their doctrine was true. Observe, that the apostles Peter and John did not pretend to have any power or holiness but from CHRIST; on the contrary, they positively declared, that it was *through faith* in the name of CHRIST, that the lame man was made to walk. The apostles believed, that on their saying to the man, "*In the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, arise and walk,*" he would have the use of his limbs; and the lame man believed their words. Observe also, that Peter spake of CHRIST not only

only as the SON OF GOD, but as the HOLY ONE; and the JUST, by whom he meant the MESSIAH. Peter, on this occasion, observed great zeal and boldness; he was not afraid to reproach the Jews with the crime they had committed, or to proclaim the crucified JESUS as the true Messiah, the great Prophet of whom Moses wrote. By preaching in this manner Peter fulfilled our Lord's words, that *repentance, and remission of sins, should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem*, and that Peter should be the first preacher of the Gospel after his ascension.

Learn from this discourse of the apostles, that the *grace of God* is freely offered to all those who repent, and believe the Gospel, however wicked they may have been; but this should not encourage any one to lead a wicked life, as he cannot be certain he shall be disposed to do what GOD requires if he gets into habits of wickedness: not all who heard Peter's discourse were converted by it. Though GOD *offers* his grace to all, the *will of man* is *free* either to accept it or not, so that though we cannot be saved by *our own works*, without the *grace of GOD*, neither shall we be saved by the *grace of GOD*, if our works are directly contrary to his commandments; for, from such persons GOD withholds his grace; he bestows not upon them either remission of sins, or the gift of the HOLY GHOST. Remember, that as the SON OF GOD came on purpose to bless and give remission of sins to all who repent, we should therefore resolve to turn away from all iniquity, that we may partake of the blessings purchased for us by our great Redeemer.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 13. The *captain of the Temple*, *ver. 1*, was the officer who commanded the Levites then in waiting. Observe, that our Lord himself was particularly opposed by the Pharisees; and the Sadducees, who disbelieved the resurrection from the dead, particularly persecuted his apostles. Peter and John went to the Temple about three o'clock in the afternoon; it was late in the evening when they were seized. On the morrow they were brought before the very council which had condemned Christ to death, and placed as criminals at the bar of justice, according to our LORD's prediction,

tion, that *they should be delivered up to the council for his sake*; see *Matthew, x. ver. 17*. The prophecy to which Peter alluded, *ver. 11*, is in the *118th Psalm*. Our Lord had promised his disciples that *he would give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay and resist*; see *Luke xxi. ver. 15*. This was remarkably fulfilled on the present occasion. Peter and John showed that, according to their Lord's injunction, *they did not fear those who could only kill the body, but that they feared Him who alone is able to destroy both body and soul in hell*.

Ver. 13 to 23. Observe the malice and obstinacy of the Jewish council who were resolved to oppose the doctrine of CHRIST, though they plainly perceived a miracle had been wrought to confirm it; also, the impious command they gave, *ver. 18*, and the answer of Peter and John, *ver. 19, 20*.

Ver. 23 to the end. The prophecy which the Christian brethren applied to Christ, *ver. 25, 26*, is in the *2d Psalm*, and it was remarkably fulfilled by the Jewish rulers, Herod and Pontius Pilate. The shaking of the place where the apostles were assembled, *ver. 31*, and their being immediately filled with the HOLY GHOST, was a token to them that God had accepted their prayer, and that he would always protect them. Observe *ver. 32, 34*, what is said of the first Christians. It was necessary that they should sell their possessions, and have all things in common at that time, because they would be obliged to go from place to place on account of persecution; but there is no occasion for those who live in a Christian country to imitate the first Christians in this respect; for, in the present state of the Christian church, this would make great confusion, though it was very proper at the time it was done; but we should be ready to do every kind office for our fellow Christians, and every action of our lives should be marked with *singleness of heart*; whatever is done to gain the praise of men is contrary to Christianity; but those who act uprightly will always be in favour with good people.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 12. God struck Annanias and Saphira dead, that their example might prevent others from joining the
apostles

apostles on false pretences, to the scandal of the Christian profession in the beginning. St. Peter told Annanias, *ver. 3*, that he had *lied to the Holy Ghost and to God*, because he had attempted to deceive the Holy Spirit, who is GOD. This man and woman were tempted by Satan, but they were not forced to yield to his temptation; they did so *willingly*, or they would not have been guilty of sin. Observe, that it was by the HOLY GHOST the crime of Annanias and Saphira was made known to the apostle: this shows that nothing done in secret can be hid from the knowledge of GOD. The reproof which St. Peter gave those sinners, and the judgment inflicted upon them by the Almighty should make every one who reads it afraid of using deceit and falsehood.

Ver. 12 to 17. Observe, that the miracles which were wrought by the hands of the apostles, and the love and reverence the people had for them, were certain proofs of the truth of their doctrine. They likewise proved the truth of our LORD's promise to his disciples, that *they should perform wonderful works through his divine power*.

Ver. 17 to 34. Observe what wonders the LORD wrought for his apostles to encourage them and prove the truth of their doctrine. This deliverance ought to have convinced their enemies that it was in vain to oppose the Gospel. Observe, with what boldness the apostles preached the Gospel to those very rulers who had put CHRIST to death, and stood forth as witnesses of the resurrection and ascension of their Lord and master, appealing to the testimony of the HOLY GHOST, by whom they were inspired. Observe, *ver. 33*, that though the Jewish council were *cut to the heart* with these truths which they could not deny, they continued obdurate.

Ver. 34 to the end. It was very remarkable that the apostles should find an advocate even in the Jewish council; the advice which Gamaliel gave, *ver. 34*, &c. was very prudent and good. He is supposed to have been the learned doctor by whom St. Paul was brought up; *see Acts*, xxii. 3. Observe, that the apostles set an excellent example to ministers of the Gospel to be zealous and steadfast in their duty; and the people who honoured and magnified them acted very properly. If the apostles were now upon the earth it would be right for every one to follow them and hear their discourses; but we must take care not to pay the honours due to apostles

apostles only, to preachers who go wandering about from place to place, preaching in fields and houses. These may be good and well-meaning men; but it is certain that, whatever they may fancy, they are not inspired, for they *cannot work miracles*. To honour *them* as *apostles*, is to dishonour the *true apostles* of Christ, by setting those upon a footing with them, who are greatly their inferiors. It is true that the apostles were *unlearned and ignorant men*; but there is no reason to expect that such persons will be inspired to preach in the present state of the church, because the whole of the Christian religion is to be found in the New Testament, and there has been an order of ministers regularly ordained from the time of the apostles; therefore, nothing more is to be done than for these preachers to explain what the Scriptures teach. Common Christians have no right to set up as publick preachers of the Gospel, though they may exhort one another.

Compare the condition of the apostles who were so cruelly persecuted with that of Christians in this country at the present day, and be thankful. At the same time remember, that there have been persecutions here on account of religion, and there may be again, and resolve to endure every thing you may be called upon to bear for Christ's sake.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 9. We have here an account of the institution of the order of deacons who were appointed by the apostles to distribute the alms of the faithful. This order is still kept up in the Church of England; every one who enters into holy orders is ordained as a *deacon* before he can take *priest's orders*. The employment of deacons is not exactly the same as in the time of the apostles, because the state of the church is altered. Observe, that the deacons were ordained by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, without which they would have had no authority to perform any office belonging to the church. Take notice, also, how greatly the number of believers multiplied, and that many of the Jewish priests became converts to Christianity.

Ver. 9 to the end. Observe, that Stephen, though so remarkable for his piety and goodness, was not long before he felt

felt the malice or hatred of the Jews, but that he listened to their false accusations with undaunted courage. Observe what is said of him, *ver. 15*. This change of his countenance was probably a sign from heaven that he was approved of the Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1 to 54. Observe here, that Stephen being called upon by the high priest, *ver. 1*, to answer the charges brought against him in *chap. vi. ver. 13*, &c. proved in a long discourse that he was neither an enemy to GOD nor the law, that he worshipped the GOD of Abraham, that Christ was the Messiah, and that GOD's covenant and his service were not confined to the nation of the Jews; that he reproached the Jews with having been rebellious to GOD from the beginning, and with having persecuted the prophets. Observe, *ver. 38*, that Stephen speaks of the LORD who delivered the law from Mount Sinai. The ANGEL OF THE LORD, and the ANGEL OF THE COVENANT, are different titles of the SON OF GOD; see *Genesis, chap. xvi. ver. 7, 10, 11* compared with *ver. 13*; see also, *Gen. chap. xlviii. 16*, where Jacob calls the LORD the angel that redeemed him, and *Exodus, iii. ver. 2* compared with *ver. 4, 6*, which are sufficient to prove that Stephen could not mean a created angel.

Ver. 54 to the end. Observe, that instead of being convinced by his powerful arguments, the Jews were more and more enraged against Stephen, and nothing would satisfy them but his death; but though they vented their utmost fury upon this good man, they could not prevent his having a calm and happy death. Whilst he beheld the glorious vision of his Saviour, and heaven open to receive his departing soul, this faithful disciple despised all sufferings, and showed by the last words he spake that he died willingly for the sake of the Gospel, and in love and charity with his very enemies. Observe that he prayed CHRIST to receive his spirit, and that he prayed for his enemies. As Stephen was favoured with a vision by which he knew that heaven was opened to receive him, all other martyrs may be certain it will open to receive them also; and there have been numbers since Stephen who have died in the same happy way. Hundreds at different times have been burnt to death for the sake of their religion,
and

and have scarcely appeared sensible of pain in the midst of the flames, so strong were their hopes of future happiness, and so powerful the consolations of the HOLY SPIRIT to their souls. The death of true believers, unless when they have unhappily given way to melancholy, is always happy, whether they die by the hands of their enemies, or by disease and decay. They *see by faith* their Redeemer the LORD JESUS at the right hand of God, ready to receive their souls, and introduce them to eternal glory.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 9. Saul, who is said, *ver. 1*, to have been consenting to the death of Stephen, was a young man, very zealous for the religion of the Jews, a strict Pharisee, and a great opposer of the Christian religion. Observe, *ver. 4*, that when persecution broke out, the disciples no longer found it expedient to keep together, but dispersed and preached in different places; and that this persecution was a means of spreading the Gospel. *Ver. 4.* Thus the kingdom of heaven increased, as our Saviour had foretold, *like a grain of mustard seed*. In the behaviour of Saul we have an instance of the crimes which well-meaning people may be hurried into through misguided zeal. Saul verily thought, as he declared afterwards, that *he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*; but if he had thought coolly, his reason would have told him that it was very wrong to take such violent measures against persons whose lives and conversations were blameless, only because they differed from himself in religious opinions, especially when they gave such evident proofs of having a divine commission. Nothing could have justified the Jews in persecuting the Christians, but their having an express command from God himself to cut them off, as those of ancient times had in respect to the heathen nations; neither can Christians be justified by the principles of their religion in persecuting others for difference of opinion; yet this has often been done in a dreadful manner.

Philip was one of the seven deacons named *chap. vi. ver. 5*. Observe, that he had the power of working miracles, for he was a minister of CHRIST, ordained by the laying on of the hands

hands of the apostles. Observe also, that the devils had still the power to possess people, and that the ministers of Christ, speaking in his name, and acting by his authority, had power to cast them out.

Ver. 9 to 26. What is said of the credit which the people of Samaria gave to Simon the magician, shows, that those who know not the truth are easily seduced by impostors; but the change that happened in that city after Philip had preached to them, proves that truth will triumph over falsehood. Observe, *ver. 13*, that Simon himself desired to be baptized, which proves that the wicked are sometimes affected with the excellency of the Gospel so as to embrace the profession of it; but not acting upon good principles, their conversion is not sincere. Observe also, *ver. 18*, that the *gift of the HOLY GHOST* was bestowed upon the new converts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

Ver. 26 to the end. Candace is supposed to have reigned over the same country as the queen of Sheba. The officer of queen Candace whom Philip baptized had before renounced idolatry, and embraced the Jewish religion, as we may know by his reading the writings of the prophets. The passage he was reading is in the *53d chapter of Isaiah*. This prophecy was written long before our Saviour came into the world, yet it describes his sufferings, death, and burial, as if it had been written after his crucifixion. Observe, that Philip and the eunuch went down into the water together. In those hot countries they baptized in rivers; but in respect to the Sacrament of Baptism, it makes no difference whether a person be dipped or only sprinkled; for it is the *inward and spiritual grace*, the *gift of the Holy Ghost*, that cleanses the soul from the defilement of sin; the *water* is only the *outward and visible sign*, the *token of faith and repentance* in the person baptized.

From Philip's being sent to instruct the Ethiopian, we should learn that God takes particular care of those who read the Scriptures with the sincere desire to understand them, and gives a greater degree of grace to those who have made a good use of the light afforded them. The eunuch could not understand the prophecy, and there was no persons in his own country who were capable of explaining it; therefore a minister

minister of the Gospel was sent on purpose to teach him on his journey. But this is not the case with those who live in a Christian country like ours, where there are ministers in every parish, churches open, and numbers of good books; so that no one need be ignorant of the meaning of any part of Scripture that is necessary for their soul's good, if they are desirous to learn.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 10. Observe, how furious Saul was against the Christians, and that he went with the authority of the chief priests to persecute. But the LORD knew his heart, that he acted under a mistaken notion of serving the cause of true religion, and that when his zeal was properly directed he would be a useful member of the Christian church; the LORD therefore chose him for an *apostle to the Gentiles*, and that Saul might bear witness to his resurrection, vouchsafed to convince him that he was actually in a state of glory, as his disciples declared him to be. While Saul was without sight he had time to reflect upon what had happened to him, and to consider whether he would embrace the Christian faith or not. Observe, *ver. 4*, our Saviour's words, "*Why persecutest thou me?*" which show, that he considers the injuries done to his church as done to himself.

Ver. 10 to 20. Observe, that Saul became a sincere believer; upon which he received remission of his former sins by baptism, and was filled with the Holy Ghost after the same manner as the other apostles. After this Saul was called Paul. The sudden change that was wrought in this apostle was very happy both for himself and the church, but you must be careful not to expect from it that God will work miracles for the conversion of hardened sinners; for there is no reason to believe that if Paul had been either an impious or an immoral man Christ would have chosen him to be an apostle. What we particularly learn from this chapter is, that our Saviour is actually in a state of glory, as his apostles declared, and that he still watches over his church.

Ver. 20 to 32. Observe, that as soon as St. Paul was converted and began to preach the Gospel he was persecuted by the Jews. By this means his fidelity was put to the test, and he

he was taught to suffer for JESUS CHRIST's sake. It was very astonishing to see the man who had been a persecutor of the Christians boldly preaching even in the city of Jerusalem that very Gospel he had before so warily opposed.

Ver. 32 to the end. Observe here, that the same kind of miracles were wrought by the apostles, as our LORD had wrought while upon earth which contributed to the conversion of a great number of people. But take notice, *ver. 34*, that St. Peter did not pretend to work miracles by his own power. The raising Tabitha to life again may be regarded as a proof that the prayers of the poor are heard for those who perform acts of charity towards them. Not that all charitable women are to expect to be raised from the dead by a miracle, but perhaps their lives may be lengthened on account of their good deeds; and if it should please God to take them out of the world, they may be certain that their good works will follow them, and be richly rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. Even a poor woman may imitate Tabitha by working when she has time for a poorer neighbour. Observe *ver. 18*, that the *gift of the Holy Ghost* was bestowed upon the new converts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 9. Cornelius was a Roman officer, who was stationed with some troops at Cesarea; though a Gentile, Cornelius was a very good man, and had he died without the knowledge of Christ, he would doubtless have been admitted into heaven among those *from the east and from the west, who are to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, in the kingdom of heaven*; but he could never have discovered, by his *own reason*, the truths revealed in the Gospel; he could never have been certain that his good deeds were accepted of God, and that he should rise from the dead. In order therefore to reward this good man for his piety and charity, an angel was sent to inform him that he was approved of God, and to put him in the way of becoming a Christian.

Ver. 9 to 24. The Jews had a notion that the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom were to be confined to themselves, and that the Gentile nations would have no share in them,

and St. Peter seems to have taken up this opinion. The vision he had was designed to remove this prejudice; Peter did not immediately understand what was meant by it; but when he received an account of GOD's message by an angel to a Gentile, he perceived it was intended to show him that he was not to despise the Gentiles, but to admit them into fellowship with himself and the rest of the believers of the Jewish nation.

Ver. 24 to 34. Peter having been the subject of an angel's message, appeared to Cornelius a person of great dignity; Peter knew from the vision he had had, and from his being directed to go to Cornelius, that something extraordinary was to be done; but till he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, he knew not what words he was to say to the Gentile centurion and his friends.

Ver. 34 to the end. Observe, that Peter being inspired by the Holy Spirit, preached the same Gospel to Cornelius, and the other Gentiles assembled, as he had preached before to the Jews; and while he was doing so the Holy Ghost was visibly sent upon the Gentiles present, after the same manner as upon the Jews, when Peter first preached to them on the day of Pentecost; by this circumstance Peter was fully convinced that it was the will of GOD the Gentiles as well as the Jews should be admitted into the Christian church by baptism. Remember that from this time there was no distinction in respect to *spiritual blessings* betwixt Jews and Gentiles; and it is remarkable that St. Peter was the first preacher of the Gospel to both, as our Lord foretold, *Matthew*, xvi. *ver. 18.* Observe, that St. Peter's discourse to Cornelius comprehends the substance of the doctrine which the apostles preached; those important truths which ought to be received by all Christians. He represents faith in CHRIST, and holiness of life, as the only conditions of salvation. The attention, submission, and obedience, with which Cornelius, and all who were with him, heard St. Peter, ought to teach us to receive the word of GOD with the same dispositions, when it is declared to us. And as we of this country descend from those who were at first heathens, we should be very thankful to GOD for admitting the Gentiles into his covenant, and for pouring forth his Spirit upon them as well as upon the Jews.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 19. Observe, that the Christians at Jerusalem were offended at first that St. Peter had been with Cornelius and his friends, because it was not lawful for the Jews to have any familiar intercourse with the Gentiles; but when he had informed them of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentile converts, they rejoiced; and their behaviour teaches us that we ought to rejoice in the favours God bestows upon others, especially when they are called to repentance and everlasting life; and it ought to be the subject of great joy and gratitude to us, on our own account, that God *has granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.*

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe here, that the dispersion of the church at Jerusalem, and the persecution which was raised against the Christians, contributed to spread the Gospel in many places, and that many churches were founded and kept up by the ministry of Barnabas and Paul, and other persons, who laboured for their edification. Observe, *ver. 26*, at what place the followers of Christ were first called Christians.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 20. Observe, that the apostle St. James, as St. Stephen had done before him, sealed the truth of the Gospel with his blood, which shows that he was fully persuaded of the truth of it, and we may be certain he received the glorious reward prepared in heaven for martyrs to the Christian faith. The *Herod* here mentioned was not that king who put John the Baptist to death, but *Herod Agrippa*, nephew to the other. It was to please the Jews that he was cruel to the Christians. Observe, that God who had permitted James to be put to death, did also permit Peter to be imprisoned by king Herod; but he was set at liberty in a miraculous way, to show, that though God sometimes allows the wicked to execute their designs, yet when it pleases him He restrains them, and that He always watches over his faithful servants.

Ver. 20 to the end. The death of Herod, who was eaten of worms as a punishment for his pride and presumption, is

worthy of our most serious consideration. This event which is likewise related by Josephus the Jewish historian, shows that God confounds the proud; and particularly that the persecutors of the church commonly come to a fatal end, and sooner or later receive the punishment due to their wickedness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe, that the apostles and all the first ministers of the Gospel were directed by the immediate inspiration of God. There is no occasion for this now, as every thing our Saviour and the apostles taught as necessary for salvation may be read in the Bible; but as the sacred books were written at first in other languages, and the gift of tongues is not continued, it is proper that Christian ministers should be learned men. The work for which Barnabas and Paul were separated, was that of preaching to the Gentiles. Observe, that they were ordained to this holy office by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. This rule has been kept up in the Christian church from the time of the apostles. The bishops, who are now at the head of the church, practise it, and every clergyman is ordained first *deacon*, and afterwards *priest*, with solemn prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Bishops, who are so far in the Apostle's place, that it rests with them to see that no false doctrine is taught in the church, and that its holy ordinances, amongst which is the laying on of their hands, are observed, and an order of regular ministers kept up. *John*, who is mentioned *ver. 5*, was *John Mark*, not St. John the Evangelist.

Ver. 4 to 14. Observe, that after the laying on of the hands of the apostles, Barnabas and Saul were filled with the HOLY GHOST; this was the work of God, and every Christian minister no doubt receives this gift when he is properly ordained, so as to be able to do his duty, provided he make a good use of it, though he is not endued with the gift of tongues, or the power of working miracles. Sorcery was a diabolical art, and those who practised it were the declared enemies of God. Observe St. Paul's words, *ver. 10*. At the first preaching of the Gospel the agents of Satan used every means they could devise to prevent it. Sergius Paulus

was

was a Roman governor, consequently a heathen, but he became a Christian.

Ver. 14 to 44. Observe, that in St. Paul's sermon he gave a short history of what GOD had done for the Jews as his peculiar people, and showed them that JESUS CHRIST was the true Messiah, *the Son of David*; after which he preached the Gospel to them, and proved that CHRIST was also the SON OF GOD, the Saviour of the world, through whom alone they could obtain remission of sins. Observe also his admonition, *ver. 41*, and take notice that the Gentiles, meaning those probably who were before converted to the Jewish religion, desired to hear the Gospel. The prophecies alluded to in *ver. 40, 41*, are in *Isaiah, chap. xxix. ver. 14*, and *Habbakuk, chap. 5*.

Ver. 44 to the end. Observe what opposition the Jews made to the propagation of the Gospel, though the prophets, whose books made a principal part of the religion they professed to believe in, plainly foretold that the Gentiles would be received into the church. Those who were *ordained to eternal life* were those who were willing to receive the truth; those Gentiles who besought the apostles to preach the Gospel to them; those, who, according to our Saviour's parable of the sower, received the *seed into good ground*: we must be very careful not to suppose God ordained any individuals to *eternal life*, without regard to their good qualities; or any, on the other hand, to *eternal misery*, who had not brought his wrath upon themselves by their own personal wickedness, for this is contrary to God's merciful dealings with mankind, and to the whole tenor of Scripture. Observe, *ver. 50*, that persecutions were stirred up by the Jews against the Christians in every place they went to.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe, with what zeal the apostles persisted in preaching the Gospel in spite of the persecutions they met with.

Ver. 8 to 19. Jupiter and Mercurius, *ver. 12*, were two principal idols amongst the heathens, to whom they used to sacrifice *oxen*, adorned with garlands of flowers. The apostles rent their clothes because they were shocked at the thought

of being made idols of. Observe, *ver. 15, 16, 17*, that the apostles called upon the Gentiles to worship the true God, who was still their God, though the Jews were his peculiar people; and he had suffered the Gentiles to follow their own ways without cutting them off from the earth.

Ver. 19 to the end. Observe the exhortation of the preachers of the Gospel to the first Christians, *ver. 22*, which taught them that they were not to expect any worldly advantages in consequence of embracing the Gospel. Observe also, *ver. 13*, that every church had *regular ordained ministers*, which shows that it is agreeable to the will of God that there should be every where Christian ministers to instruct, to exhort, and to govern the church.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 36. Observe here, that the Gentiles who were converted to the Christian religion were not required by the apostles to comply with the ceremonial law of the Jews, but only with the moral law: the things from which the Gentiles were particularly commanded to abstain, *ver. 20, 24*, made part of the idolatrous worship of the heathens.

Ver. 36 to the end. Observe, in these verses, that two excellent servants of God, Paul and Barnabas, were of different opinions in some things, but this difference did not hinder either of them from labouring as before in the spreading of the Gospel, for in regard to its doctrines they were of the same mind.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 9. St. Paul saw fit that Timothy should comply with the Jewish law because he was partly of Jewish extraction, and it would have been an hindrance to his ministry if he had not done so. Observe, that in those early days of Christianity there was a regular church establishment, consisting of apostles and elders, and that the church was governed by laws and institutions appointed by them, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and that no one was allowed to exercise the ministerial office till he had been properly ordained by the apostles and elders. Observe also, that the
apostles

apostles were particularly directed to the places where God saw fit to have the Gospel preached. The apostles preached the Gospel by the river side, because there were no churches built for Christian worship.

Ver. 14 to 25. Observe, *ver. 14*, that God *opened the heart of Lydia*; this God graciously does by all who are willing to learn and to obey his divine doctrine. The apostles casting out the devil with which the damsel was possessed was a proof of the power of Christ in whose name they did it, and it ought to have led her masters to receive the truth; but it appears that they suffered their minds to be set against the teachers of it, and preferred their worldly to their spiritual interests.

Ver. 25 to the end. Observe here a most remarkable instance of God's protecting his faithful servants, which shows that all that was done against the apostles turned to the glory of God, promoted the increase of the Gospel, and their own comfort. The citizens of Rome had great privileges, and the magistrates had acted against the laws in the treatment they had given to the apostles. It was for the honour of the Gospel, and to prove their own innocence, that Paul pleaded the privileges of a Roman citizen; had he done it at first he might have avoided the scourging and imprisonment, but he would not then have shown that he was ready to endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1 to 16. The arrival of St. Paul and Silas at Thessalonica and Berea, their preaching in these two cities, and the tumult which the Jews raised against them show, that St. Paul was not disheartened, but that the Jews were the most bitter enemies of the Gospel, persecuting it in every place. Observe, that Paul and Silas, however, had the comfort of making converts in every place. What is said in praise of the Bereans, *ver. 11*, should teach us to receive the truth with willingness, and at the same time with knowledge. Every Christian has a right to examine, by the word of God, the doctrine that is preached to him, for the Scripture is the only rule of faith, and if we search the Scripture we shall find every article of the Christian faith in the *Apostle's*

creed, confirmed by some part or other of the writings of the apostles and evangelists.

Ver. 16 to the end. Athens was a city of Greece famous at that time for learning and learned men, but the Athenians were quite ignorant in respect to religion, being idolaters. They worshipped a great many false gods. St. Paul being grieved at seeing the city of Athens in such a state preached the Gospel there. The Areopagus, mentioned *ver. 19*, was a famous court of justice. The *Epicureans* were heathen philosophers of a sect founded by Epicurus an Athenian. The *stoics* were of another sect of heathen philosophers. Observe, *ver. 21*, that the Athenians were fond of discussing curious questions, and quite unsettled in respect to their religious opinions, and that St. Paul had a great desire to set them right. Observe also, that he did not talk to them as he did to the Jews of JESUS CHRIST, for they would not have known who he meant by the SON OF GOD, he therefore began with endeavouring to bring them to the knowledge of the *one true God*, of whom the philosophers themselves, though they professed to teach wisdom to the people, were ignorant. This discourse was well calculated to show the folly of worshipping idols, and it appears that some persons were convinced by him. Dionysius, the Areopagite, was a member of the tribunal of the Areopagus. Remark particularly what the apostle says, *ver. 30*, which teaches us, that though God made allowances for the unenlightened heathens who had not the same advantages of knowledge as the Jews had, while they were shut out of the covenant, those to whom the Gospel is preached must not plead ignorance in excuse for their sins, but must follow and obey its doctrines, as they will be called to a strict account for their neglect at the day of judgment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. Corinth was another celebrated city in Greece; it was famed for the wealth and luxury of its inhabitants: by St. Paul's long stay there we may perceive that he had great zeal and success in his ministry. Thus the Christian religion was more and more established by the preaching of the Apostle. Observe, *ver. 3*, that St. Paul wrought at the trade

trade he was brought up to, because there was no settled maintenance for the ministers of the Christian church in the beginning; but it is very proper that provision should be made for ministers, that they may have time for their studies, which are now necessary for those who teach religion, since they are not immediately inspired. It is a great blessing to have an order of men regularly set apart for the ministry, and we should be thankful to God for having continued it to us from the time of the apostles.

Ver. 12 to 24. The several journeys and voyages of St. Paul show that he was continually employed in the duties of his ministry, that he laboured earnestly for the edification of the church.

Ver. 24 to the end. Observe the great zeal of Apollos, and the success of his preaching, and take notice that he was well acquainted with the scriptures, and an eloquent man; but at that time he had not been informed of any baptism but that of John. The expression, *ver. 27, believed through grace*, signifies that the grace of God is necessary to give efficacy to the preaching of the Gospel. Apollos was very useful in convincing the Jews from the Scriptures that Jesus was the CHRIST, but he was not yet a regular minister of the Gospel.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe in these verses that many persons were baptized according to the baptism of John. What that was we read in the *third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*, the *first of St. Mark's*, the *third of St. Luke's*, and the *first of St. John's*, and it appears that the Baptist only baptized his converts *with water unto repentance, for the remission of sins*; and that he told them a greater than himself would come, who should *baptize them with the HOLY GHOST*, by whom he meant JESUS CHRIST. Our Lord himself when he ordained the Sacrament of Baptism, before he ascended into heaven, commanded his disciples *to baptize all nations in the name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST*; and this is the baptism meant here, *ver. 5*, which was performed in the name of the LORD JESUS, and which was accompanied by the gift of the HOLY GHOST. Tyrannus
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in whose school St. Paul is said, *ver. 9*, to have taught, is generally supposed to have been one of St. Paul's Gentile converts. It was on account of their faith in Christ, when St. Paul preached, that the people who sent handkerchiefs, &c. were healed, not from any virtue in the apostle's body.

Ver. 13 to 21. Exorcists were persons who pretended to have power to cast out evil spirits; what happened to those who adjured the spirits in the name of Jesus, tended to convince the Jews and all the world that none but the apostles and such as believed in CHRIST had really power over unclean spirits. Magical arts were greatly practised at that time, not only by the heathens but amongst the Jews, though it was contrary to an express law of Moses, to have any concerns with witches or wizzards, &c.; *see Deuteronomy, chap. xviii. ver. 10, &c.* Those who burned the books which were valued at so high a price showed their sincere penitence.

Ver. 21 to the end. The moon was worshipped by the heathens as a goddess under the name of Diana, and adored as the *Queen of Heaven*. The shrines made by the silversmiths are supposed to have been medals with Diana's image, or the figure of the Temple at Ephesus impressed upon them. The *craftsmen* who raised a tumult against St. Paul had their own interest only in view; but they pretended to be zealous for the honour of their goddess, as they called her. The *town clerk*, who quelled the tumult, showed himself to be a very prudent man. If people could but be brought to consider *that the law is open*, and that no one ought to take upon him to be judge in a publick cause, a great deal of mischief would often be prevented.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe, *ver. 7*, that it was the practice of the first Christians to meet together on the first day of the week to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and to hear religious discourses. The miracle performed on the young man who fell asleep, helped to confirm the faith of all who were present. This accident which had like to have proved fatal to Eutychus, should be a warning to all who go to places of publick worship to keep their attention fixed on
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the discourse of the preacher ; had Eutychus done this he would hardly have fallen asleep whilst the apostle was preaching.

Ver. 13 to 17. St. Paul probably wished to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, that he might commemorate the descent of the HOLY GHOST on that day with the Christians.

Ver. 17 to the end Take particular notice of St. Paul's discourse to the pastors of Ephesus before he took his final leave of them, as it shows with what integrity, zeal, and disinterestedness he had discharged his ministry. His constancy under afflictions, his great piety, and settled resolution to serve the Lord faithfully to the end, and even of sacrificing his life with joy for the sake of the Gospel. Observe also what St. Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus concerning *their* ministry, as it shows that the office of a minister of the Gospel is of the greatest importance, and that when they have warned and instructed their flocks they will not be answerable for the souls of those who do not do their duty. The tears which the elders of the church of Ephesus shed at parting with St. Paul proved how highly they loved and esteemed him, and at the same time show how strong the affection ought to be that unites ministers to their flocks, and how much Christians should dread to be deprived of the ministry of the faithful servants of God.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 15. Philip, here called the evangelist, to whose house St. Paul went, was one of the seven deacons, the same who baptized the Ethiopian nobleman ; *see Acts, chap. viii.* The prediction of Agabus concerning St. Paul, shows that nothing befel that apostle but by the especial will of God, who saw fit that he should be persecuted, delivered to the Gentiles, and afterwards carried to Rome, that he might bear witness to the truth of the Gospel every where. His answer to those who besought him not to go to Jerusalem, shows how entirely he was devoted to the service of Christ, and that nothing could shake his constancy.

Ver. 15 to 27. What St. Paul did when he went to the Temple at Jerusalem must be looked upon as an act of prudence and charity, and designed to prove that he was not an
 enemy

enemy to the law of Moses. The Gentile converts were not required to conform to the ceremonial law of Moses, but they were enjoined, *ver.* 25, to abstain from three sins in particular, to which the heathens were greatly addicted.

Ver. 27 to the end. It is very remarkable that Providence delivered St. Paul from the rage of the Jews by means of the tribune, or chief captain, making use of what St. Paul had done in compliance with the Jews, to cause him to be seized and delivered by that very people into the hands of the Gentiles, as had been foretold.

CHAPTER XXII.

The design of St. Paul's discourse in this chapter was to show the Jews he was no enemy to their law and nation, that so far from it, he had been very zealous for their religion, in which he was brought up at Jerusalem; that he was formerly a zealous persecutor of the Christians, and that he embraced Christianity, and preached it every where in obedience to an heavenly call. The rage of the Jews when St. Paul said, *ver.* 21, that the LORD had sent him to the Gentiles, shows that the chief cause of their hatred against this apostle was the aversion they had to the Gentiles being admitted into the church of God. Observe, St. Paul had a right to plead the privilege of a Roman citizen, and as it was a lawful means of securing himself against their violent and unjust hatred, he did so.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1 to 12. From what St. Paul said when he was reproved for speaking with anger to the high priest, we should learn to behave respectfully to persons in authority. Observe, that he addressed himself to the Pharisees in order to show that he taught what they themselves believed in respect to the resurrection of the dead.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe, that Paul was in a most dangerous and perilous situation, and without a divine vision he would probably have been disheartened. From the conspiracy formed to kill him, we may see how great the malice of the Jews was, and to what excesses hatred, joined with a false

false zeal for religion, is capable of hurrying men, which should lead us to reflect how dangerous it is to be carried away by passion and to make rash vows. Observe, in the deliverance of Paul how God preserves innocent and good men from impending dangers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1 to 10. The person here called an *orator* was employed in the same manner as the counsellors are in England at the bar. Observe, that the accusation which Tertullus laid against St. Paul, and which the Jews confirmed, was a very unjust one; but it gave occasion to the apostle to defend himself, and declare what his real principles were.

Ver. 10 to 24. Felix was the Roman governor. Observe, that Paul was neither ashamed nor afraid to avow his principles, even before the greatest personages; that he took every opportunity of declaring his belief in the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine which Christians should never lose sight of. The kindness of the Governor to him shows that he thought him unjustly accused.

Ver. 24 to the end. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa. She had been married to Azizias king of the Eme-fenes, but Felix had persuaded her to desert her husband and marry him. The topics which St. Paul preached upon, were particularly adapted to his hearers. He reasoned of *righteousness* before a corrupt, covetous, and unjust judge; of *temperance* before a man and woman who had married in contempt of all laws; of a *judgment to come*, where no man's power will defend him from the punishment due to his crimes: Felix *trembled* because his conscience felt the force of St. Paul's reasoning; but it appears that he did not amend his life in consequence of it. This is the way with many people in the world, they follow the example of Felix, when their conscience is awakened, instead of acting agreeably to the views which open on their minds, they defer the consideration of the things on which their eternal happiness depends to an *uncertain hereafter*. They drive away reflection with business and amusement, till their minds grow callous, and thus by a repetition of sins they bring upon themselves everlasting destruction. How much better would it be to live like St. Paul,

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in such a manner as to have conscience their friend, which will ever be the case with those who strive like him to do their duty to God ; whatever injuries they may meet with from a mistaken world, they will be enabled to bear them with patience, and will be secured from the terrors of a judgment to come.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe here, that God did not suffer the Jews who had bound themselves by an oath to kill St. Paul, to put their wicked designs in execution. St. Paul's desiring his cause should be referred to the Roman Emperor, when he knew that the Jewish rulers would certainly condemn him to death if he was tried by them, shows that it is lawful for Christians to make use of all the lawful means of defence which Providence puts in their power. Observe also, how every circumstance contributed to bring about the design of Providence in respect to giving Paul an opportunity of preaching the Gospel at Rome, as our Lord himself had foretold he would do. The compliance of Festus, with St. Paul's request, shows that the Roman Governor, though a heathen, had more integrity than even the high priests and rulers of the Jews.

Ver. 13 to the end. King Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa, whose miserable death is related in *chap. xii.* He had obtained from the Roman Emperor some authority over the Temple and its sacred treasury, and the power of appointing or deposing the high priest. Bernice was his sister. The arrival of this prince at Jerusalem, just at this time, was another occasion with which the Apostle was furnished by divine Providence for preaching the Gospel in the presence of many persons of the first rank, and of justifying his own conduct and the doctrine he taught.

CHAPTER XXVI.

In the whole of this discourse St. Paul displayed such wisdom, steadiness, moderation, and courage, as plainly showed his innocence and zeal. The mild and respectful, but at the same time frank and sincere manner in which he spoke, should teach

teach all Christians to answer with meekness and humility when they are required to give an account of their faith, and never to dissemble the truth. Observe, *ver. 8*, and reflect that the Being, who could create all things from nothing, can as easily raise the dead to life. Take notice also, *ver. 9*, that St. Paul was sincere in his desire to promote the honour of God when he persecuted the Christians. The sins he committed at that time were sins of ignorance, which a merciful God is ready to pardon in all who act to the best of their knowledge, and who imitate St. Paul in repentance and amendment of life, when they are made sensible of their error. Observe, *ver. 13*, &c. the account which St. Paul gives of what our Saviour said to him at his conversion. What Festus said, *ver. 24*, shows that the most serious things appear like folly and madness to the worldly minded. Observe that Agrippa, who professed the Jewish religion and believed the prophets, found in the Apostle's discourse, a probability of truth at least, but he did not become a Christian, because, after being almost converted to Christianity, he took no care to be further instructed in its holy doctrines. Remember that it is in vain to be half, or almost a Christian, we must be so altogether, and with our whole heart. It appears from *ver. 31, 32*, that Agrippa and Festus were quite convinced the charges brought against St. Paul were groundless, so that his innocence was fully vindicated, and he went to Rome not as a criminal, but merely by the appointment of Providence, that he might preach the Gospel there. On this, and on many occasions, the LORD fulfilled the promises he made before his crucifixion to his apostles, that when they should be brought before rulers and kings to bear witness of him, he would assist them by his Holy Spirit, and put into their mouth what should be necessary for them to speak in their defence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In this chapter we have a very affecting narrative of a shipwreck, and we may learn from it that nothing can hurt those whom God protects. Paul was a faithful minister, and it was the will of God that he should preach the Gospel at Rome, which was the principal city of the Gentiles, where
 idolatry

idolatry was carried on in all its pomp and abomination. The Roman Empire, according to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, was soon to be broken in pieces by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, the kingdom of the Messiah, but not till it had wrought the Lord's vengeance upon the Jewish nation. The faith of the apostle was tried by the dangers he was exposed to, and it pleased the Lord to support it by a wonderful vision, *ver.* 23. We should learn from the ship's company being saved for his sake, that it is always a great happiness to be in the society of good men.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. I to II. The island here called Melita now bears the name of Malta. *Barbarians*, and *barbarous people*, signified strangers or foreigners; the names given by the ancient Greeks to all who did not speak their language. The judgment which the people of the island passed, *ver.* 4, shows that even heathens thought that great crimes would not go unpunished; and the opinion they conceived when St. Paul shook off the serpent, *ver.* 6, must be imputed to their ignorance; but this miracle, as well as that of healing the father of Publius, and other diseased persons, shows us the accomplishment of the promise which our Saviour Christ made to the apostles in St. Mark's Gospel, *chap.* xvi. *ver.* 18.

Ver. II to the end. What the Jews called *the sect* that was spoken against, *ver.* 22, signified the church of Christ. St. Paul conducted himself agreeably to the general rule given by our Saviour, by preaching the Gospel first to the Jews. Observe, that to such as rejected it the Apostle applied the prophecy of Isaiah, which our Saviour himself had frequently applied in the same manner to those who had provoked God to leave them in spiritual darkness.

During the two years of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome he made a number of converts to the Christian faith, and we learn from his Epistles that the Christians at Philippi and Macedonia hearing of his imprisonment made a large collection for him, and sent it by their bishop Epaphroditus, by whom he sent back his Epistle to the Philippians; *see Philip. chap.* iv. *ver.* 14, &c. Shortly after this he had the comfort

to hear that the Christians at Ephesus continued in *faith* and *charity* as he left them; but fearing they might be perverted by false teachers, he wrote an Epistle to establish them in the doctrine he had taught them; *see the Epistle to the Ephesians*. At this period of St. Paul's imprisonment it is thought St. Luke wrote his Gospel, with the Apostle's assistance.

In the year of our Lord 68, as learned authors compute, Paul was restored to his liberty. Having converted many of the Romans he travelled into other parts of the world, and before he passed out of Italy is supposed to have written his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Leaving Italy St. Paul sailed westward, as we are assured by one of the first Christian writers, and preached the Gospel in Spain: some learned authors say that he planted a church in Great Britain; and after travelling to several other parts went to Ephesus. From thence he passed into Macedonia and visited the Philippians. Here he staid a considerable time, and is thought to have written, during that period, his *first Epistle to Timothy*, and also that to *Titus*. After this Paul went to Corinth, to Ephesus, and other cities, from whence he proceeded to Jerusalem, where he was persecuted by the Jews. Here he preached before Festus, Felix, and Agrippa, and was sent by his own desire to be tried at Rome, where he was indulged with the liberty of living in his own hired house; but after two years he was thrown into prison. Nero the emperor was gone into Greece, and had left a wicked man named Helius sole governor of Rome in his absence; by his command St. Paul was beheaded.

Thus died this illustrious Apostle, after having for above thirty years, with the most exemplary zeal and piety served God, and preached the Gospel of his *beloved Son*. It appears from his Epistles that having fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, he was desirous of being dissolved that he might be with Christ; and receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord had destined for those who should lay down their lives in testimony of his holy religion; *see 2 Timothy, chap. iv. ver. 6.*

THE EPISTLES.

THE epistles are letters which were written by the Apostles whose names they bear, to the different churches or societies of Christians, which they had founded in various parts of the Roman empire; in order to establish the faith of their converts; explain the principles of Christianity more fully; and determine the disputes which had arisen amongst some of those who before their conversion were of the Jewish religion, and those who had formerly been heathens. Such being the nature of the epistles in general, great care should be taken by all who read them, not to apply every text they meet with in these writings, to themselves, or other Christians of the present day: for, by so doing, many have fallen into errors which have led them far away from the true doctrines of our holy religion; and occasioned them to form ideas of God, and the redemption of mankind, inconsistent with what is *plainly* taught in other parts of scripture.

St. Peter, in his *second Epistle General*, chap. iii. gives a caution respecting the writings of his brother Apostle St. Paul, which should be observed by all Christians; and it is particularly seasonable now, as St. Paul is often quoted to confirm doctrines which he never preached or sanctioned:

After observing, that in St. Paul's epistles there are some things *hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction*, St. Peter adds, *ver. 17, Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know these things, namely, what he had treated of in the foregoing verses, the second coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, &c. beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.*

And when we consider the Epistles of St. Paul, or any of the other Apostles, as particularly adapted in many instances to the circumstances of the times in which they were written, we shall no more wonder that they should be in some respects dark to us, than that we are not able to understand

at the present day, the whole of the Jewish scriptures, or of the prophetical parts of the New Testament.

When St. Paul wrote his Epistles, the Christian religion was indeed beginning to spread in the world; but all who were converted to it had been, as we observed before, either *Jews* or *Gentiles*; the former were desirous of retaining the ceremonies of the Mosaic law; they had also an aversion to holding fellowship with the Gentiles; and the latter had imbibed opinions from the heathen philosophers, which they did not like to give up; and they were moreover attached to the superstitious rites of idolatrous worship. The great persecutions which were raised against the Christian church in the Roman empire, prevented the first preachers of the gospel from holding public assemblies; they were under the necessity therefore of making use of private houses as places of worship, and of preaching the Gospel wherever they could find opportunity; and each Apostle had a divine commission to call upon all to whom they were sent to attend to their discourses; they had also the power of working miracles in the name of the LORD JESUS, to confirm the truth of their mission. The doctrine they preached was truly divine, immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost, as was also all that they wrote; the Epistles therefore, very properly make a principal part of the volume of Scripture, which would not be complete without them; because our blessed LORD left it for his Apostles, as his first ministers to carry on the instructions he had given his hearers in his own divine discourses, which could not be extended till after his death, because they were intended to relate to his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and the affairs of the church till his second coming.

Christians of the present day are therefore under very different circumstances from those of the Apostles' times. They have neither Jews nor heathens to dispute with. They have the written Scriptures for their guide; they know that they are delivered from the burden of the Mosaic law: and that they have nothing to do with the doctrines of the heathen philosophers; and those of this happy country are free from persecution; they have churches in which they may assemble without fear or danger; they have a regular order of ministers, which may be traced

up to those who were first ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, according to JESUS CHRIST's holy institution; and they have an established form of worship, in every respect agreeable to the doctrines of our Saviour and his Apostles. Christians of the present day, therefore, have no reasonable cause for dissensions; they can have no occasion to assemble in fields, or to make churches of private houses, in order to hear the Gospel.

But unhappily there has been a great falling off from the established church; and there is a great number of sects and parties amongst us; still, however, the established church, as maintained in the kingdom, is a true branch of the holy universal church, built on the *foundation of the Apostles*. JESUS CHRIST *himself being the chief corner-stone*, the members of the church of England therefore, that is, all who have been baptized in their infancy, or at any time according to the Office of Baptism in the Common Prayer Book, are bound to continue firm to its ordinances and doctrines to the end of their lives; for they cannot find any good, that is, any *scriptural reason* for departing from it; and they should carefully guard against the insinuations of those who would draw them away from it; but at the same time they should also avoid giving way to a contentious and persecuting spirit. Preaching the Gospel is not the work of ordinary Christians; it is not therefore necessary for them to understand all that is written in any of the Epistles, because, as we said before, some parts do not concern them; but in every one of the Epistles there is a great deal of general instruction; much that every Christian should learn and practise; these parts are clear and easy to be understood by the unlearned; and such persons should not attempt to understand what is beyond their comprehension. They should read the Epistles with humble minds, forbearing to penetrate into the meaning of what appears dark and obscure, and making those texts and passages only their study which are level to their capacities; and it is hoped that the following explanation will assist them in this important concern.

ROMANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE Epistle to the Romans was written about the fifty-seventh year of our Lord. It was addressed to the Christians in the city of Rome. The design of it was to shew that faith in Christ, through the Gospel, is the only way of salvation; and that the Gentiles who embraced the Gospel were not obliged to submit to circumcision, and the ceremonies of the Jewish law, as certain Jews converted to Christianity pretended; and that God might without injury to the Jews, call the Gentiles, and receive them into his covenant, as the prophets had foretold he would do. At that time the disputes which prevailed among the converted Jews and Gentiles greatly disturbed the unity of the church.

Ver. 1. Recollect in what manner St. Paul was called and separated to be an Apostle, *see Acts chap. ix.*

Ver. 2. *The prophets* were Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the antient prophets in the Old Testament.

Ver. 3. Remember, that every one who is baptized into the Christian religion, is *called* to be a *saint*, that is, to lead a holy life.

Ver. 11. The Apostles had the power to impart spiritual gifts, in order to establish the faith of their converts; but this power was limited to them.

Ver. 14. The *Greeks* were the people who dwelt in a country called Greece; they were highly renowned for their learning, and they esteemed all but those who knew the arts and sciences, *barbarians* or *savage people*.

Ver. 16. Observe what the Apostle says of the Gospel of Christ, and do not suppose as the Jews did, at that time, that salvation is limited to those who call themselves the chosen of God; though certainly no one to whom the Gospel is preached can be saved without *faith*.

Ver. 17 to the end. These verses describe the condition to which the heathens had brought themselves in consequence of their departing at first from the true religion. In the beginning of the world, as we read in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, God revealed himself as the CREATOR, the TRUE GOD; and it was through the wickedness of men,

not for want of a revelation from God, that idolatry gained ground. Observe what dreadful crimes the heathens committed, and, *ver.* 28, that they were not before they were *created* condemned to a state of *reprobation*; but given up to it after long forbearance on God's part, because they *did not like to retain God in their knowledge*.

CHAPTER II.

We may understand from this chapter, that the Jewish converts bore great enmity to those who had been Gentiles, and that it was very wrong in them to pass such censures upon their fellow Christians who were upon the same footing with them in respect to the grace of the Gospel. And it should keep all Christians from boasting of themselves as the *elect of God*, and judging hardly of any who profess to believe in God, and trust in the same Saviour for redemption. Observe also, that the works of the *moral law*, the *ten commandments*, are referred to *ver.* 21, &c. as things *to be done* by all who call themselves Christians. *Ver.* 28. The *circumcision of the heart*, signifies the putting away of wicked thoughts and desires. A true Christian, as well as a true Israelite, is one who strives to get the better of the corruptions of human nature,

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1, 2. The Jewish nation was certainly a favoured people, as God had promised to his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they should be; and while they remained separate they had greatly the advantage of the heathen nations. The oracles of God, which were committed to them, signified, the *commandments, the statutes, the laws, and the ordinances of God*. The reasoning in the following verses is among the things which St. Peter says, are *hard to be understood*, and which he cautions the *unlearned* not to meddle with lest they *wrest them to their own destruction*. It is certainly true, that all mankind stand in need of a Saviour to redeem them, because all are reckoned sinners, as being of the race of Adam, and also because there has never been, nor will there ever be, a mere human creature free from the corruption

corruption of actual sin; and there is no way for them to be saved but by the free grace of God, bestowed for the sake of JESUS CHRIST; all, therefore, to whom the Gospel is preached, must place their dependance for salvation on the merits of their Saviour, not on any works of their own; yet they must not neglect to do the works enjoined by the moral law, namely, the commandments of God. We find by the preceding chapter that, the people of God whether Jews or Christians, were, and are, required to keep the law; let not any one say, therefore, that the works of the moral law are of no avail to Christians; for unless they conform to the commandments of God, they will have no interest in the salvation purchased for mankind by the death of the Redeemer; on the contrary, our Saviour has declared, that at the last day he will say to those who neglect to do these works, *Depart from me ye wicked, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* See *Matt. chap. xv. ver. 41, &c.* also, *Matt. vii. ver. 21, 22, 23.*

CHAPTER IV.

Observe in this chapter, that the *faith* which was approved in Abraham, was a faith built on the promises of God, which led him to obey the commands of God however difficult they might appear. Call to mind these promises, and what God commanded him to do, as related in the book of Genesis, and turn also to chap. xi. of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, where you will find that Abraham had, like Christians, an eternal inheritance in view. You will then understand what a *justifying faith* is, that is, a faith which God *reckons for righteousness*, namely, a faith which leads those who do it to obey the commandments of God; for none will be justified at the last day, for their faith, unless it is accompanied with good works; though without faith they certainly would not be justified, or reckoned righteous for their works only.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 7. The doctrine of *justification by faith*, as explained in the last chapter, is very comfortable, for without

it there could be no peace to those who know that eternal death is the punishment of sin, which can only be taken away by the free grace of God.

Ver. 7 to the end. Take particular notice of the Apostle's reasoning in these verses, which plainly shews, that *every human creature* to whom sin is imputed on account of Adam's offence, namely *his whole race*, has an interest also in the redemption purchased by Christ. In what manner the benefit has been and is applied to those who have not been or are not of the household of God, *the church*, is not fully explained in the Scriptures; and, as Christians, it does not immediately concern us to enquire: The *judge of all the earth will do right*, we cannot doubt; and how he will deal with those to whom his Gospel is made known is *plainly* revealed in that Gospel. Let not the unlearned Christian then, perplex his mind with difficult questions, but rely upon the declaration of the Apostle, *ver. 15 to the end of the chapter*, which shews that the injury done to mankind by the offence of Adam, is recompensed in the sight of GOD, by the righteousness of Christ, and his obedience to death for the redemption of the world, so that all will be saved who testify a true faith by good works.

CHAPTER VI.

The doctrine contained in this chapter is for the most part plain and easy to be understood.

Ver. 1 and ver. 15. teach us, that we must not presume so much on the free grace of God, as to expect to be saved by it, if we continue in the practice of wickedness.

Ver. 2 to 12. instruct us to consider Christian Baptism as the means by which the free grace of God is first bestowed under the Gospel; and we also learn from these verses the happy effects produced by this holy sacrament, in which we are made *new creatures*; that is, changed, as the Church Catechism expresses it, from *children of wrath* to *children of grace*; or, in other words, from *children of Adam* to *children of God*. If we keep in mind what has been done for us in our baptism, and the high relation we bear to God as our *Heavenly Father* through JESUS CHRIST, we shall be
careful

careful to follow the advice given by St. Paul in the following verses.

Ver. 12, 13. The meaning of the first of these verses is explained by the other. We *let sin reign in our mortal bodies* when, in violation of our baptismal vow, we *yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness*, that is, when we give ourselves up to the practice of wickedness; and we are *free from sin*, that is, from the punishment of it, as baptized persons, as long as we lead a Christian life, trusting in the promises of God through JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER VII.

This is one of those difficult chapters with which the unlearned often puzzle themselves and others.

Ver. 1 to 7. These verses teach that the Jews might forsake the law of Moses for the Gospel of Christ, which was intended to be put in the place of it.

Ver. 7 to 13. The meaning of these verses is, that the law of Moses was holy and good; that it was not the cause of sin, but that it had not the power to free men from corruption, and sanctify them as the Gospel does.

Ver. 13 to the end. In these verses the Apostle supposes himself to be a man living under the law; without the hope which the Gospel gives, and in subjection to sin and death; and he renders thanks to God, for having delivered him from that condition through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. The same kind of conflict which St. Paul describes, as passing in his mind, all Christians experience in a greater or less degree; and without the hope of the Gospel we should every one have cause to cry out with him, *ver. 24, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death*; but through the grace of God in CHRIST JESUS, those who believe in him as a Saviour, and are desirous to keep the commandments, have cause to rejoice with the Apostle in the means bestowed for obtaining a victory over their carnal desires, the inclinations of their own corrupt nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1 to 15. The Apostle shews here that the condition of true believers is very happy, as they are delivered through JESUS CHRIST, from the condemnation which is justly due for sin, and from which the law of Moses could not deliver them. He also shews that it is an unspeakable advantage to belong to Christ, that is, to be members of his church; and that those whom he regards as such, may be known to themselves and others, by *the holiness of their lives and conversations*. Observe, in particular, *ver. 14*, and remember, that to be *led by the spirit*, is to do those things which we know from the Scriptures (which were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to be agreeable to the will of God, instead of following the desires of our own hearts, which are often contrary to God's will and commandments.

Ver. 15 to 18. Observe here, the honourable relation which the Christian bears to God, and the privileges bestowed upon him as such; namely, permission to call the greatest of all beings his FATHER; and to consider himself as entitled, as the child of God, to an heavenly inheritance.

Ver. 18 to 28. Observe here, that the Apostle does not promise that Christians shall enjoy more happiness on earth than other people; on the contrary, he tells those to whom he wrote, that they must prepare themselves for great sufferings; but he tells them at the same time, that God would support and comfort them under all the trials to which he should see fit to expose them.

Ver. 28 to the end. This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible, and many people have been led by an erroneous interpretation of it into an idea, that some part of mankind are doomed by the absolute decree of the Almighty, before they come into the world, to inherit the kingdom of heaven for Christ's sake, let them do what they will while they live upon earth; and that having predestinated them to eternal glory, God will at some time of their lives give them a new birth, and totally change their nature; so that they shall be filled with the Spirit of God; after which no sin will be imputed to them, neither can they be deprived of an heavenly inheritance. But this can never be the meaning

of the passage ; for such a construction makes God partial in his dealings, *a respecter of persons*, which he certainly is not. The Creator of the world doubtless knows all things past, present, and to come ; he, therefore, must have known from the beginning, what *kind of persons* every individual that *should* be born into the world *would be*, and we read here, that *foreknowing* those who by faith and obedience would please him, he resolved to *justify*, or to regard them as just persons, to love them, and bless them, and provide them an eternal inheritance in his kingdom of glory ; and whoever is of this happy number will undoubtedly enjoy the favour of God, and the love of Christ, and be finally put in possession of an heavenly inheritance, in spite of all that the malice of wicked men or devils can practise against them. But no one can be amongst the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven who has not, *without any compulsion on God's part*, led a life of faith and holiness on earth, according to the light he has had. To know whether we *are* or *are not* of the number of *God's elect or chosen people*, we must, instead of trusting to *inward feelings* (by which many have been deceived), examine ourselves to see whether we have a hearty and constant desire to obey God's holy commandments, a sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment when we are conscious of having offended him in thought, word, or deed, an earnest desire to possess the treasures of heaven, and such a love for our Redeemer that we should be ready to sacrifice any thing, even our very lives, rather than be separated from him. If such be our faith and our practice, we may surely hope to be reckoned among the *elect people* of God, who will be owned by Christ as his at the resurrection of the dead.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 6. These verses shew that it was matter of great grief to St. Paul, as an *Israelite*, to think that the Jews had brought a curse upon their nation, so as to provoke God to cut them off for a time, from his church. His words, *ver. 3*, signified, that he could have been content to have borne that punishment himself, if by so doing he could obtain for the nation the privileges of the Gospel. Observe,

ver. 4, 5, how highly distinguished the Israelites formerly were as the chosen people of God: and also, *ver.* 5, what the Apostle says of CHRIST, which shews that he was convinced of our Saviour's being *truly* God. In the remaining part of the chapter, the Apostle employs a variety of arguments to convince the Jews that God, who is LORD of all, may impart his favours to whom he pleases, and withhold them from whom he sees fit, without being charged with injustice or partiality to any nation, or any person whatever. And he produces instances to shew the method of God's dealings with mankind, in respect to his regarding one nation for a time, as his own peculiar people, and excluding all the other nations of the earth from the privileges of the church; and his afterwards casting off the nation he had first adopted, and admitting those whom he had before rejected. And God's method in these dispensations appears to be this, God knowing before hand what every man *will be* when they come into the world, in respect to *goodness* and *wickedness*, orders their lot accordingly. This was shewn, as the Apostle observes, in the instance of God's preferring Jacob to Esau as the head of the chosen nation before either of them were born; for Esau when he was in the world, by despising his birth-right, and marrying Canaanitish women, proved himself to be a *very unfit person* for this holy purpose; and Jacob, by his faith and constant obedience to God's commands, proved himself to be a *proper person*; yet the latter had cause to impute the choice that had fallen on him to the *free grace* of God, because it was made before he could have done any thing to please God; and Esau had no reason to complain of his being rejected, because he acted in such a manner as must have provoked the Lord to reject him if he had been chosen as the head of the nation, but we must observe that nothing is said here of the predestination of Esau to *eternal damnation*; nor of Jacob, to *everlasting happiness*.

In the case of Pharaoh again, *ver.* 17, the LORD knew beforehand what a presumptuous sinner Pharaoh would be; and he resolved to place him in the high station he filled upon earth, that he might make use of him for the purpose of showing forth his own Almighty power, as he did by the plagues he sent upon him and his people. The comparison
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of the *Potter*, makes this doctrine still clearer: A man of this description sorts his materials, and uses the best clay for the best purpose, and makes mean vessels of that which is fit for nothing else: in like manner the Almighty as supreme Governor of the world *predestinates* those whom he *foreknows* will, after long forbearance on his part, delight in nothing but wickedness and mischief, to be *vessels* or *instruments of destruction* to themselves and others; and those whom he *foreknows* will delight in acts of kindness and benevolence, to be *vessels* or *instruments of his mercy and goodness*, and this not only for the sake of others, but to give them occasion for doing those things for which he has promised a glorious reward. This idea of *predestination* is perfectly consistent with all that the Scriptures teach us concerning the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God. But to suppose, as many people understand this chapter, that God by an absolute decree, without any regard to the part they would act on earth, predestinated at or before the creation some part of mankind to everlasting happiness in heaven, let them commit ever so many sins; and others to everlasting misery in hell, let their lives be ever so correct, is contrary both to reason and scripture. At the end of the world every one will be judged by the rules of the gospel according to what they have done in the body, whether it has been good or bad; then the *vessels of destruction* will be cast away; and the *vessels of mercy* will be received into the kingdom of glory. Instead therefore of being puffed up with a vain conceit that we are *chosen vessels*; or giving way to the dreadful apprehension that we are *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, we should resolve to do our duty in the best manner we can, beseeching God to employ us constantly as instruments of his good providence.

The concluding part of this chapter, and indeed the greatest part of it relates chiefly to God's calling the Gentiles into his church, and rejecting the Jews, at which the latter very unreasonably took great offence.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 14. In these verses St. Paul still continues to hear of the rejection of the Jews; and shews them that faith is a much more easy way to obtain justification than the
works

works of the law. It was in vain for the Jews to expect to be saved by the works of the law; that is, by their sacrifices and offerings, and other ceremonies, after the Redeemer had set those ordinances aside by offering himself; but the Apostle tells them, *ver. 9, &c.* what they must do *to be saved*. *To believe unto righteousness, ver. 10*, signifies to have such a faith as Abraham had, leading to obedience.

Ver. 14 to the end. The Apostle here shews that preaching is necessary in order to awaken this faith in those who have never heard the doctrine of redemption through Christ, and that it is a great happiness and privilege to have preachers to bring these glad tidings of salvation; but we ought to be very cautious *who we hear*, for there are many that pretend to be inspired to preach the Gospel, who pervert the doctrine of the Apostles, and mislead their hearers. The proper preachers of the Gospel are those who are educated for the ministry, and solemnly set apart for the sacred office, according to the apostolic institution.

CHAPTER XI.

When God cast off the Jewish nation he did not reject the whole race of Abraham; on the contrary, the Gospel was first offered to them; and such as accepted it were retained in his Church, they were the first Christians. And the Apostle cautions the Gentiles not to triumph over the Jews, because their nation was cast off for a time, but to take heed to themselves; and he also intimates, that the time will come, when the Israelites will be converted and received into favour with God again. Instead of puzzling ourselves, therefore, to understand *all* that the Apostle says on this head, let us admire with him *the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, by which he has ordered the government of the world from the very beginning in the most perfect manner; so that at the end of it no individual will have cause to say, he has not experienced the mercy and goodness, as well as the power and justice of the LORD of all things.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1, 2. We are now come to the *practical part* of this Epistle which is easy to be understood, if we observe that the Apostle supposes those whom he addresses to have a will of their own, and to be capable of doing their duty, without being *forced*, provided they will make use of the means of grace which God has afforded them under the Gospel.

Observe, *ver. 1*, that he does not tell Christians that God will *transform them, by a renewal of their minds*, without their doing any thing on their part, but he entreats them to *lay hold of the mercies of God*, and since God has offered to accept them for Christ's sake, to *present their bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable to God*; or, in other words, to repent of their sins, and receive the holy sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER, which was ordained as a means for renewing the souls of those to righteousness, who sincerely repent of their sins, have a thankful remembrance of God's mercy through Christ, and are in love and charity with all men.

Ver. 3 to 9. These verses related chiefly to the first Christians who had extraordinary gifts, but they may be applied in a lower sense to Christians of the present day; and *ver. 3* furnishes a very powerful admonition to *unlearned men*, who set themselves up as preachers of the Gospel. When the Apostles had the *gift of preaching* by the immediate inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, they had also the *gift of tongues*. There is no occasion for the extraordinary gift of preaching now, because the whole of the Christian doctrine is contained in the New Testament; all that the preachers of it have to do, is to explain and enforce what our Saviour and his Apostles preached; and in order to do this it is expedient that they should be *learned men*; because the scriptures were first written in languages which none but the learned can read; if, therefore, the *Gospel preachers*, as they are called, those *illiterate persons* who preach about in fields and private houses, had the gift of preaching, they would undoubtedly have the gift of *understanding these languages*; they would also have the *power to work miracles*, which all the first preachers had.

Ver. 9 to the end. These verses are so plain as to need no explanation,

explanation, excepting one expression in the 20th ver. *for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*, by which is meant *melting any one to kindness*, overcoming his ill will by relieving his necessities.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 8. By the *higher powers* are meant, those persons who are at the head of the nation, and who govern it. These the Apostle teaches us we are to consider as *ordained of God*; that is, God has ordained that every nation shall have governors at the head of it, and laws by which the people must submit to be governed; and there can be no peace in a nation without them, for the wicked would entirely overcome the good part of the community, if there were no laws to restrain them, or magistrates to put these laws in force; to submit to the laws is therefore the duty of Christians, whatever government they may happen to live under. The word *damnation*, ver. 2, may be understood to mean *condemnation, to suffer the penalty of the law*; not *eternal damnation*. Observe, ver. 7, that the Apostle speaks of *tribute, custom, &c.* as the *just due* of persons in certain offices of government. The Jewish nation being at that time in subjection to the Romans, the Jews were required to pay a certain sum yearly as a tribute to the Roman emperor; and they had other customs or taxes to pay; being Christians did not release them from these, though the emperor was a heathen; of course Christian kings and governors have a right to expect that their subjects should render to them what is their due. But people often suffer themselves to be set against their king and governors by evil-minded men; which would never be the case if they properly considered what the Apostle here teaches us.

Ver 8 to the end. Love is a debt we never can fully pay, for as long as we live in the world we must owe love to one another; yet we must keep on paying it continually, in the way the Apostle points out, namely, by keeping the commandments of the second table, the sum and substance of which, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, our Saviour calls *one of the great commandments of the law*. In ver. 11,
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the Apostle calls upon Christians to rouse themselves from that stupid state in which too many pass their lives; and to remember, *ver. 12*, that *the night*, the time allotted them upon earth, is with many *far spent*, and that *the day*, meaning their eternal state is *near at hand*; they should therefore make haste to *cast off the works of darkness*, all kinds of wickedness, and *put on the armour of light*, meaning christian virtues. What some of the works of darkness are, the thirteenth *verse* teaches; and how we are to gain christian virtues, the fourteenth *verse* instructs us. *To put on the LORD JESUS*, is to be Christians in faith and practice, and to set the affections of the heart on *heavenly* not on earthly things. Observe in this chapter that the works of the *moral law* are required of Christians.

CHAPTER XIV.

For the right understanding of this chapter, we must remember that at the time St. Paul wrote, there were many Christians, who having been Jews, and not yet fully convinced that the ceremonial law was abolished, scrupled to eat of certain meats forbidden by that law, and continued to observe a distinction of days after the Jewish manner. The Apostle shews here, that weak Christians are to be treated with kindness and indulgence; and that it is a great sin to discourage or give offence to our neighbours, as those do who call others *reprobates*, and say other shocking things to those who profess to believe and trust in Christ as a Saviour, and hope to be saved on the terms of the Gospel. He also teaches that every one ought to abstain from doing what he cannot do with a safe conscience. Christians of the present day are in very different circumstances from those to whom St. Paul wrote this letter; they have neither been Jews nor heathens, and they may know from the Scriptures, that it is lawful for them to eat any thing in moderation, provided they keep from things that have been strangled, and from blood.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses the Apostle continues his exhortation in respect to the indulgence that should be shewn to weak Christians, and enforces them by the example of our

blessed Saviour, who never was severe to any such, but made allowances for ignorance and infirmity in those who were willing to obey the Gospel.

Ver. 7 to the end. The Apostle here shews, that one principal end of Christ's coming into the world, was, to unite Jews and Gentiles in one church, as had been foretold by the ancient prophets. Observe *ver. 19 &c.* what St. Paul says of his own labours and travels; and remember that he was once a persecutor of the Christians. Observe also, *ver. 30*, that he desired the prayers of those to whom he wrote; from whence we should learn that it is the duty of Christians to pray for their ministers; and for this reason we have collects in the Common Prayer Book for the clergy, in which all the people are required to join.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 17. We may judge from this chapter, that the Gospel had made a considerable progress at Rome, when St. Paul sent this epistle. *Ver. 5*, We read of the church which was in the *house of Priscilla and Aquila*; but we must remember that this was in the earliest times of christianity, when Christians could not assemble publicly, on account of the persecutions which were raised against them.

Ver. 17 to 20. Observe these verses particularly, and let them serve as a warning to you, not to hearken to those who would set you against your minister, or divide you from the flock to which you properly belong. At the same time you should avoid sowing dissension amongst others; the questions which occasion a separation among Christians, and divide them into sects and parties, are such as the unlearned are by no means qualified to judge of; and the only way to avoid dissension is to keep firmly to the worship of the established Church, which has a service belonging to it, in which persons of all ranks may join, with the certainty of worshipping God agreeably to the doctrines of Scripture.

Ver. 25 to the end. We ought to offer up such thanksgivings as this Epistle ends with, and to bless God, that he has revealed in CHRIST JESUS, the great mystery of redemption, which is now unfolded in the Gospel, for the benefit of all nations.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE Corinthians, to whom this and the following Epistle were addressed, were for the most part converted Gentiles, who lived in a famous city of Greece called Corinth; but it is supposed there were some converts among them who had been Jews. Greece was at that time renowned for learning, and there were in every city philosophers who talked a great deal to those who followed them as their disciples, concerning *Human Reason*, as if all wisdom might be gained, even of divine and heavenly things, by *reason* alone; but all the wisdom of philosophers when compared with what the Scriptures teach, is *foolishness* in the sight of GOD. There is no true wisdom but that religious wisdom, which comes by divine revelation.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 10. The Church at Corinth, *ver. 2*, signified the society of Christians in that city. Those that *were sanctified*, meant such as had been cleansed from original sin, in the Sacrament of Baptism; all these were *called to be Saints*, that is, required to live holy lives. Observe that the Apostle prays for Christians in all parts of the world as *one body*; and, *ver. 4*, that God had bestowed every necessary gift upon the Corinthians to confirm them in the faith; it would therefore be their own fault, if at the second coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, they should not be *justified* or *found blameless* as his true disciples. *Ver. 9*, to be *called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ*, signifies to be made a Christian.

Ver. 10 to 18. Take particular notice of these verses, which plainly declare that there should be *unity* in the christian Church, and that it should not be divided into sects and parties. For this purpose, the Common Prayer Book was provided for the members of the Church of England; and all those who keep to this Church speak the *same words*, and use the same forms in public worship. Observe, that even St. Paul who was an Apostle would not allow his converts to be called after *his name*, as if he was the head of a sect; but

desired that they should remember in whose name they were baptized.

Ver. 18 to 26. CHRIST crucified for the salvation of mankind, is the substance of the Gospel, which the Apostle preached in plain terms such as the unlearned could comprehend. The *wisdom of words*, which he did not use, meant the learning which the philosophers were so proud of, and to whom the doctrine of the cross appeared foolishness; though in the sight of God it was true wisdom. Observe that the apostle in calling preaching *foolishness*, *ver. 21*, alludes to the opinion of the Gentiles and the unconverted Jews, who esteemed it so. To them that *are called*, *ver. 24*, those who believe the Gospel, it appears in its true light.

Ver. 26 to the end. The first preachers of the Gospel were for the most part unlearned men; they were chosen on purpose to confound the *disputers of this world*, who in the days of the Apostle were the Jewish doctors and the heathen philosophers; St. Paul indeed was a *learned Jew*, but he laid aside his learning when he became a preacher of the Gospel, and spake no wisdom but that with which he was inspired by the Holy Ghost. We must be very careful not to suppose, from some expressions in this passage, that none but *unlearned men* are fit for preachers, the very contrary is the case now: a certain degree of human learning is necessary for the ministers of the Gospel, to enable them to read the Scriptures in their original language, and explain what is become difficult, by distance of time and change of circumstances in the christian world; a plain proof that unlearned men are not inspired to preach the Gospel may be drawn from the ill success of such persons when they go out to foreign parts as missionaries, to preach the Gospel to savages; they have neither the *gift of tongues*, nor the *power of working miracles*, therefore they cannot make converts. All that the Apostle says concerning the *foolish* and the *base things* of the world, relate to the first preachers, who in their writings, still continue to confound the *mighty* and the *wise*, by their heavenly doctrine. To their writings then we must look for the words of true wisdom; and expect nothing further from our ministers, than a faithful administration of the Holy Ordinances of religion, and a true explanation of the Holy Scriptures.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter shews what course St. Paul took when he was called of God to be an Apostle, namely, to lay aside all the human learning he had acquired, and to keep entirely to what should be put into his mind by the HOLY GHOST. This was right in him, because he knew that he should be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and that he ought not to mix what the world called wisdom, with that which was the only true wisdom, lest his hearers should build their faith on a wrong foundation. What the Apostle thus preached was wonderful even to himself; but that which before was a *mystery*, or hidden thing, was revealed to him, and he preached it to others. As this doctrine relates entirely to spiritual things, it cannot be received by the *natural man*, that is, by those who trust to their own understanding; but by those only who desire to be guided by the Holy Spirit, in studying the word of God.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 5. St. Paul compared such of the Corinthians as were still fond of worldly wisdom, to *babes* who must be fed with *milk*, because they were not capable of digesting meat. The milk he had fed them with, was the first principles of the Gospel; and as a proof of their weakness, he reminds them, *ver. 3*, of the strife and division that prevailed among them.

Ver. 5 to 10. Observe that the Apostle gives a strict charge to the Christians of Corinth, not to have *favourite preachers*. There was at that time an order of Apostles, and other inspired teachers: all these preached the *same doctrine*, and they were all to be esteemed as the ministers of Christ, not as authors of a religion.

Ver. 10 to 15. In these verses the Apostle describes how he had conducted himself as a minister inspired by the Holy Ghost to lay a foundation for ministers who were *not inspired*, to preach true doctrine; and he warns all future preachers of the Gospel, to take heed what doctrines they build upon the foundation he has laid, lest they bring God's wrath upon themselves. A caution which, had it been strictly observed,

would have prevented all the divisions which have taken place amongst Christians from the beginning to the present time.

Ver. 16, 17. Observe, *ver. 16*, in what light the christian Church, that is, the whole body of Christians, is to be considered; namely, as no other than the *Temple of God*. Also, *ver. 17*, what the Apostle says of those who shall *defile* it, by bringing false doctrines into it, or leading unholy lives.

Ver. 18 to the end. The meaning of *becoming a fool that they might be wise*, was, that they should lay aside what the heathens esteemed wisdom, and keep to the doctrine of the Gospel, which the heathens called foolishness, but which is in the sight of God the only true wisdom. Observe, *ver. 22*, that the Apostle again warns the Corinthians not to set up one preacher against another, but to consider the ministry as *one*, and to give glory to none but Christ; a rule to be observed by all Christians.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses the Apostle teaches Christians in what light they should regard those who are ordained of God to instruct them in the religion of Christ. By the *mysteries of God*, we are to understand the great truths of revealed religion, and the two Sacraments, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, which it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to explain to the people, and administer agreeably to the word of God. Those who hold this sacred office should be revered by their people, and not judged hardly of by them. It certainly is an offence to God, when people set themselves against the ministers of the Church; whoever is disposed or persuaded to do so, should call to mind the Apostle's admonition in the fifth verse.

Ver. 7 to 15. These verses instruct Christian ministers to bear with meekness and patience the ill-treatment they may meet with in the course of their ministry; since the Apostles themselves were called upon to endure as great evils as could possibly be inflicted upon any preachers of the Gospel. Observe in these verses, to what indignities they were exposed. *Ver. 12*, They continued to work at the trades they practised before they were called to preach the Gospel, because

because no provision was at that time made for their being maintained by the Church.

Ver. 15 to the end. These verses shew that St. Paul had a tender affection for the Corinthians; and that it grieved him to have occasion to threaten them with chastisement. They shew also that the Apostles had authority to punish those who offended against the rules of the Church; what those rules were, and the chastisement at that time, cannot be exactly known; but it appears from the instances of Ananias and Sapphira, and Elymas, the forcerer, that the Apostles had authority to condemn some to instant death, and others to blindness; and probably to other temporal evils.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 6. The members of the Church at Corinth were highly to blame in keeping such a sinner among them. *Ver. 3* shews that the Apostles, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, knew what judgment they were to pass upon offenders without being present to examine particularly into all the circumstances of the case. *To deliver a person to Satan*, signified to excommunicate or turn him out from the society of Christians; by which, when done agreeably to the will of the LORD JESUS, he was subject to the power of Satan, to be afflicted with bodily diseases, till he should repent of the sin that had brought this punishment upon him.

Ver. 6 to the end. By the comparison of *leaven*, the Apostle here shews, that it is very dangerous to suffer notorious sinners to remain in the Church, because they infect and corrupt it; and that they ought to be excommunicated or put out of it; and the Apostle teaches, that no Christian should hold fellowship with persons who are guilty of the crimes named in *ver. 11*. This is the *Law of JESUS CHRIST*, this is what the holy Apostle with authority commanded in his name, and what the first Christians religiously practised; but by degrees as the wickedness of men increased, the discipline of the church fell into decay; but it is certainly the duty of all Christians to avoid as far as possible, the company of wicked men; and to distinguish themselves from them by a holy life and conversation. Those who live in the commission of notorious sins, though they may be al-

lowed to remain among Christians, are not reckoned as members of his Church by Christ himself, nor will they escape punishment in the next world, whatever they may do in this.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 11. These verses teach that Christians should as much as possible avoid going to law with one another. The *unjust*, *ver. 1*, meant *heathen judges*. *Saints*, signified Christians. *Ver. 2, 3*, relate to a future state; the *angels* to be judged by the saints, can be no other than the *fallen angels*. The following verses to *ver. 9*, relate particularly to the Corinthians, to whom the letter was addressed. Observe what is said in the two next verses of sins of impurity.

Ver. 11 to the end. From *ver. 11*, we may judge that some of the Corinthians had in their Gentile state been guilty of these sins; and that on their being baptized into the Christian Faith they had renounced them, and received remission or perfect forgiveness, together with the sanctification of the HOLY SPIRIT, so that they were no longer reckoned sinners, but just persons. And lest they should suppose that they had a licence to do what they pleased, the Apostle shewed them, that even were it *lawful* for them to eat meats that were offered to idols, and commit fornication, as some false teachers asserted, it would not be expedient or proper for the reasons that he gave in the following verses, which should be carefully remembered by Christians of the present day.

CHAPTER VII.

This Chapter consists of answers to several questions which the Corinthians had put to St. Paul, concerning marriage; it does not require particular explanation. The Apostle's advice, *ver. 29 to 32*, is suited to all times and all persons; for the lives of all human beings are short, their condition in this world very uncertain, and every thing here below transitory; we should therefore take care not to set our hearts upon them, but be ready to part with them whenever God shall see fit to take them from us.

CHAPTER VIII.

Though Christians of the present day have no need to be informed that *idols are nothing*, and to be warned against *eating of meats that have been offered to them*, yet the doctrine St. Paul lays down in this chapter may be of general use; for it teaches us that even the best instructed Christians should have a tender regard for those who are not so well-informed as themselves, and avoid doing any thing to give them pain, or lead them into error.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses the Apostle asserts his liberty, and that of Barnabas, to do what to them might seem right in respect to meats and drinks, and marrying, as well as the other Apostles, without being called to account for it by the world, or their converts. The word *Cephas*, *ver 5*, signifies *a stone or rock*, and is the same as *Peter*. This name was given by our Lord to Simon when he first went to him; see *John, chap. i. ver. 42*.

Ver. 7 to 24. We should particularly observe these verses as they clearly show that Christian ministers have a just claim, according to the law of the Gospel, to be provided for in the church as the Jewish priests were, without being obliged to work at any trade or follow any profession; it must therefore be a sin to withhold, as many would do, the tythes and other things which are properly their due. The Apostles indeed did not claim this support for themselves, because they knew that if they did so, many would dispute their right, and say they preached for worldly gain, which would have hindered the success of their preaching. But St. Paul did not *glory* in this, for he could do no otherwise than preach the Gospel, being inspired by the Holy Ghost; but a reward was promised to those that did it *willingly*, as St. Paul showed he did, by the pains he took to accommodate his discourses to all sorts of people.

Ver. 24 to the end. In these verses the Apostle alludes to the public games at Greece, in which some ran races, and others fought or wrestled for a prize, which was generally a *crown of laurel*. These people prepared themselves before-

hand,

hand, and St. Paul took example from them in his heavenly course, by doing what was required of those who were desirous of gaining the Christian's prize, a *crown of glory*; and every Christian should follow his example in this respect. Observe what the Apostle says at the conclusion of this chapter, "*Left when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*;" which shows, that so far from believing that he could not fall from grace after he had been once called, St. Paul thought it *necessary for his salvation* to mortify his body by abstinence and labour, and to lead a life conformable to the precepts of our blessed Redeemer; and it certainly must be equally so for all Christians.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1 to 6. In order to make the Corinthians more desirous to run the *Christian race*, that is, to live a holy life, keeping an *eternal prize* in view, the Apostle, in this chapter, sets before them the case of the Israelites, showing what privileges and advantages *they* had, and by what means they unhappily miscarried. They were baptized into the covenant made with God, and the doctrine taught by Moses; they all eat of the manna, which was a type of our Lord's body, like the bread used at this time in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (as our Saviour himself tells us, *John, chap vi. ver. 47, &c.*), and they all drank of the water that flowed from the rock, which rock was a type of Christ: but notwithstanding these privileges many of them were destroyed in the wilderness; they were not suffered to enter Canaan, which was a type of the kingdom of heaven.

Ver. 6 to 14. In these verses the Apostle admonishes Christians to take warning by the example of the Israelites, and in particular not to desire any thing which is forbidden by the law of God, or be guilty of the sin of idolatry like the Israelites in the instances referred to by the Apostles, namely, their loathing the bread which was sent from heaven for them; their worshipping the golden calf; their joining with the Midianites in worshipping Baal Peor; their speaking against God and their mediator Moses at the borders of Edom; and their bringing up a false report of the promised land, and rebelling against God: for all which things the
Apostle

Apostle observes great and heavy judgments were inflicted upon them. Observe, *ver. 11*, that *these things happened*, that is, the judgments of God were sent, not only for the punishment of the Israelites, but for another very important purpose, to furnish examples to succeeding generations. By *the ends of the world*, we are to understand the times of the Gospel. Take particular notice of *ver. 12*, also of *ver. 13*, which every Christian may apply to himself.

Ver. 14 to the end. The Apostle admonishes the Corinthians to avoid going to places where they might be tempted to join with heathens in their idolatrous feasts, and points out to them the difference between those feasts and the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is *a feast upon the sacrifice of CHRIST's death*, whereas the others were *feasts in honour of devils*, which were the false gods represented by images of various kinds. Christians are in no danger of eating *meats offered to idols*, but they have many temptations to be the servants of the devil instead of the servants of God, and all have great need of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* to cleanse them from sin and renew them unto righteousness; indeed we may learn from this chapter that it is principally by means of this Holy Sacrament we hold communion with CHRIST as our head, and with one another as members of his Church; yet many who have been baptized, and who call themselves Christians, live in the world without paying any regard to the LORD'S SUPPER; and if they go to church on the days it is administered, make a constant practice of turning their backs upon the *Lord's Table*, as if they had no interest in the death of Christ, no obligation to remember their Saviour; for which neglect they will certainly be called to account at the Last Day.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1 to 17. These verses relate chiefly to the customs of the heathens which the Corinthians were to avoid as they were become Christians; but we may learn from this passage that *man*, in respect to his being the head of this lower world, is in the *image of God*; that *woman* is put in subjection to man, and that she should on this account never go to public worship with her head uncovered.

Ver.

Ver. 17 to the end. The three first of these verses show that there were divisions in the Church even at the beginning, and it appears from the following verses that at Corinth these divisions related to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which the first Christians received every time they assembled together. On these occasions every one should have waited till the whole congregation was collected, that they might *all* partake of the bread and wine, which was *consecrated*, or set apart by a blessing pronounced on them by the Apostle or minister present, to represent the *body and blood of Christ* according to the LORD's holy institution (*see chap. ix. ver. 16, 17,*) and to serve as a means of grace to keep up a constant union between CHRIST, as the head of the church, and all the members of it. Instead of this it seems, some of the Corinthians, forgetful that there was to be a *communion*, or *general partaking of the Lord's Supper*, eat the provisions they brought with them as a *common meal* before the arrival of the rest, which certainly rendered them *unworthy* to receive the Sacrament from the hands of the Apostle or minister of CHRIST; and whoever did so brought *condemnation* on himself and was subject to the judgments which are mentioned, *ver. 30*, which they were to regard (as we learn from *ver. 32,*) as the *chastisements of the Lord*, intended to bring them to repentance, that they might not be condemned at the last day with the wicked part of mankind. From *ver. 27*, many people entertain a mistaken notion that it is *dangerous* to receive the Sacrament at all, lest we should bring *eternal damnation* upon ourselves; but it is plain from the other verses that no such thing was meant by the Apostle. All who go to the Lord's Table certainly should examine themselves as the Church Catechism teaches, namely, to see *whether they repent them truly of their former sins, have a lively faith in GOD's mercy through CHRIST, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and are in charity with all men.* Such preparation as this is in every one's power; and it is not required of those who have but little leisure, to neglect their necessary business in order to give up a whole week to prayer and meditation before they go to the Lord's Table—for the *penitent*, the *humble*, and the *charitable*, may at all times be sure of being
welcome

welcome guests there; and it certainly is a great sin, and a very dangerous practice to stay away.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter relates chiefly to those miraculous gifts which were bestowed upon the Church in the time of the Apostles, in order to prove the truth of the doctrines they preached, and to confirm the faith of the first converts. Observe, *ver.* 8, &c. what these gifts were, and that they all proceeded from the *same spirit*, namely, the HOLY GHOST. It seems that the Corinthians had had dissensions amongst themselves concerning these gifts, some preferring one kind, and some another. The Apostle shows that they each of them rendered those who had them, useful to the whole body of Christ, *the Church*; and that no persons were to be despised for not having what were esteemed the highest gifts. These miraculous gifts were not necessary when the religion of Christ was established, and they have long ceased; but the *ordinary gifts of the Spirit*, the power to understand the Holy Scriptures, to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to do our duty so as to please God, still remain, and are common to all Christians who pray for the grace of God, and resolve to be *led by the Holy Spirit*; and we should all consider ourselves as *members of Christ's body*, and as such, bound to employ the gifts of God, not for our own advantage only, but for the edification of the whole, which those do who conform their own lives to the rules of the Gospel, set a good example to others, and endeavour to promote the knowledge and practice of Christianity to the best of their power.

In respect to *miraculous gifts* sad mistakes now prevail in the world; but it is easy to prove that those who fancy they have these gifts, or would persuade others to think they have, are either deceived themselves or impose upon others. It is very certain that the *gifts of tongues*, and *of healing*, which, in the first age of the Gospel, were bestowed to prove that the gifts of *preaching* and *prayer* proceeded from the HOLY GHOST, are withdrawn; of course we may conclude that the gifts of *preaching* and *prayer* have also ceased. Besides, it is no uncommon thing to hear persons preaching extempore, from a heated

heated imagination, doctrines which if committed to writing, would be found very different from those of the Holy Apostles, who were undoubtedly inspired. St. Paul, in particular, is often mistaken by those who imagine themselves inspired teachers.

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Paul having, at the end of the former chapter, promised to show his converts a *more excellent thing* than the miraculous gifts they so highly and justly valued, tells them here, that, by this excellent thing, he meant CHARITY; by which word is to be understood, not the mere giving of alms, but that *love of our neighbour* which our Saviour recommends, and which will lead us to do every thing we can to promote the happiness of others, and to keep from doing whatever we know would injure, distress, or vex them.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe, that *without charity* even the highest miraculous gifts would be unprofitable to those who might possess them, for they would be nothing in the sight of God; and that, were people to bestow all that they are worth in the world, in what is commonly called *charity*, and even to give up their bodies to the flames, as martyrs to the faith, it would be of no use to them without real charity.

Ver. 4 to 8. Observe here, that those who have *true charity* are neither envious of the good fortune or good qualities of others, nor proud and haughty to their inferiors, nor selfish, nor peevish, nor quarrelsome; but they are meek and peaceable, judging favourably of their neighbours, taking no delight in seeing others do wrong things, but rejoicing in the prosperity and good conduct of others, and thinking and hoping the best of every one, and patiently bearing whatever is done by others contrary to their own wishes.

Ver. 8 to the end. Charity, the Apostle observes, *will never fail*; by which is meant that even in the next world we shall have occasion to love those we live amongst, and shall desire to have their love in return; but that in heaven there will be no use for any of the miraculous gifts the Apostle mentions, *ver. 8*; nor of what is called *knowledge* in this world, which is at the best very imperfect. Here we are but children in knowledge in comparison of what we shall be in heaven.

Observe,

Observe, *ver. 13*, that *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, are the three great Christian virtues; but that the *greatest of these is Charity*, because it will endure when there will be nothing *unseen* for Faith to believe, and nothing *unobtained* for Hope to desire. Whilst we remain in this world, however, we must have *all three*, or we shall not be good Christians.

CHAPTER XIV.

This chapter consists entirely of directions to the Church concerning the use of those spiritual gifts which were bestowed at that time. By *prophecy*, to which the preference seems to be given, *ver. 1*, we are here to understand not the foretelling things to come, but the declaring and explaining the *mysteries*, or secret things, which the Apostles were inspired to reveal. Without this the *gift of tongues* would have been useless. We find, by what St. Paul says in this chapter, that the persons who had these gifts could use them as they pleased; and it is the same with respect to the *learned* of the present day; they *can* read prayers and preach to the ignorant in languages, unknown to their hearers, but their proper business is to do these things for *their edification*, for which end they must speak so as to be understood. What the Apostle here teaches, plainly shows the error of the Papists in having all their public prayers in *Latin*, and not suffering the people to read the Bible.

Observe, *ver. 34, 35*, what the Apostle says about *women setting up for preachers in the churches*. Remember, *ver. 33*, that God is not the author of confusion but of peace, and *ver. 40*, that all things relating to his worship should be done *decently and in order*; and reflect what a happiness it is to have such a service as we have in our churches, which perfectly answers to these directions. We have a *regular Form of Prayer*, in which the whole congregation joins with the minister; and the same is used in all the Churches and Chapels of the Establishment throughout the kingdom. We have also an Order of men set apart for the ministry, who administer the Sacraments agreeably to our Saviour's commands, and preach the Gospel in places set apart for these holy purposes. This cannot be said of *itinerant or wandering preachers*, for their proceedings are far from *regular*. They use extempore

prayers in which the people cannot properly join, for want of knowing the words beforehand; and they often preach in such a vehement way as to hurry the spirits of their hearers, and puzzle them so with picking out difficult texts of Scripture, and explaining them wrong, that their hearers, who are for the most part ignorant people, are led into many errors which they would avoid if they kept to their parish churches and chapels, and to their proper ministers.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter relates wholly to the resurrection of the dead, a subject in which the whole race of Adam are concerned.

Ver. 1 to 20. In these verses the Apostle shows that CHRIST really rose from the dead, and that the *hope of our own* resurrection is founded entirely on the certainty of *his*. Observe, *ver. 2*, for what CHRIST died, and call to mind what you have read in the Gospel concerning his death, burial, and rising to life again the third day. *Ver. 5*, remember that *Cephas* was St. Peter; the *twelve*, the Apostles. At what time CHRIST was seen by above *five hundred brethren* is not exactly known. Recollect, *ver. 8*, that St. Paul was not called to be an Apostle till some time after our LORD's ascension. Observe, *ver. 10*, that God's grace will be *bestowed in vain*, if those to whom it is given do not make use of it. St. Paul justly ascribed his labours to the *grace of God*, though he laboured *willingly*; because, if that grace had not been given he would have continued a persecutor of the Church, instead of being an Apostle. If Christ had not been actually raised from the dead it would have been in *vain* to trust in him as a Saviour; for if he could not have raised himself he certainly could not raise us: and without the sure hope of a happy resurrection the first Christians would have been the *most miserable of mankind* on account of the cruel persecutions they endured.

Ver. 20 to 35. Observe, *ver. 20*, that the Apostle compares Christ's rising from the dead to the *first fruits of the harvest*, because it was an earnest of our resurrection, as the first fruits are of a full harvest. Take notice, *ver. 21, 22*, of the *consequences* of Adam's sin, and Christ's death, namely, *the death of all mankind*, and *the resurrection of all mankind*.

Observe,

Observe, *ver. 23*, the order of the resurrection—first the Redeemer who is already risen; then *all the righteous who shall have lived in the world to the time of his second coming*—last of all *the general resurrection at the end of the world*, when death will be put an end to. The expression, *ver. 29*, *baptized for the dead*, is not clearly understood. *Ver. 30*. The Apostles were continually exposed to danger from the malice of their persecutors; *ver. 31*, they might be said from their sufferings *to die daily*. *Ver. 32*. St. Paul here alludes to a practice among the heathens of exposing malefactors to wild beasts, with which they were obliged to fight before a vast number of spectators. “*Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die*,” was a heathen maxim; as used by the Apostle it signifies that if there was no resurrection it would be wiser to enjoy the things of this life than to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. *Ver. 33, 34*, mean that it would be wrong for those who believe in a future state to do this; and that they should rather set earnestly about considering how they may attain unto righteousness, as without it they cannot be admitted into heaven.

Ver. 35 to 50. These verses contain the plainest account that can be given to us of *the manner* of the resurrection. It is certain every seed that is sown into the ground *dies to appearance* before it is raised, and that it comes up with a very different body from that it had when it was sown. God, who thus changes the bodies of plants, can assuredly change human bodies; and we find that the change will be both glorious and durable. *Ver. 40*, *celestial*, mean heavenly bodies; *terrestrial*, earthly ones. *Ver. 47*. The *last Adam* was the LORD JESUS CHRIST, so called, because, in his human nature, he is the head of mankind instead of the first Adam.

Ver. 50 to the end. Observe, *ver. 50*, that our bodies must undergo a change before they can be fit for the heavenly kingdom. *Ver. 51* shows how this change will take place in those who shall be alive at our Lord's second coming, and the happy effects that will follow. *Ver. 56*. Good Christians, instead of dreading death, have cause to rejoice in the victory which their Saviour has gained for them over it, by preventing its being eternal; and all should follow the Apostle's admo-

niton, *ver. 5³*, by maintaining, to the ends of their lives, a steadfast belief of the doctrine of the resurrection; and by doing all manner of good works, since they may be certain that a glorious and *eternal reward* will be given to those who thus believe and live.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1 to 10. In these verses the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians to contribute to a collection which he had set a foot for the Churches in Judea; and he names the *first day of the week*, the *Lord's Day*, the *Christian Sabbath*, as a proper time for works of charity of this nature.

Ver. 10 to 19. The manner in which St. Paul here speaks of Timothy, and other godly persons, teaches us that we ought to have great reverence for the true ministers of the Gospel.

Ver. 19 to 22. The salutation in these verses shows that there ought to be a most strict communion among Christians of all parts and their ministers, so as to form ONE UNIVERSAL CHURCH, agreeing in the same faith and practice.

Ver. 22 to the end. We ought to pay very particular attention to the *Anathema*, *ver. 22*, which St. Paul denounces, for it signifies no less than that the curse of GOD will fall upon those professed Christians who, at the end of the world, shall be found not to have had a sincere love for their Saviour, and that they will be shut out of heaven. *The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST*, *ver. 28*, comprizes every spiritual blessing procured for us by our Redeemer. The Apostle's *love in CHRIST JESUS*, meant the love he bore the Corinthians as Christians.

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE principal design of the Apostle in this letter, was to defend his ministry against a party among the Corinthians who opposed it; and wholly to put an end to the disorder which some false Apostles had caused in the Church at Corinth.

CHAPTER I.

Timothy, *ver. 1*, was a young man whom St. Paul had converted to the christian faith and ordained to the ministry. *Achaia* was that part of Greece in which the city of *Corinth* was situated. Observe, that in the beginning of this epistle, after his salutation, (which is nearly the same as he used in his former epistle) the Apostle speaks of the persecutions to which he had been exposed at *Ephesus*, from which God had graciously delivered him. And he tells the Corinthians, that if he had not come to them according to his promise, it did not proceed from inconstancy of mind, but that he had delayed his journey with the hope, that he might not be obliged to chastise or reprove them for the disorders they had suffered to prevail in their Church. The expressions *our word* towards you was not *yea yea* and *nay nay*, *ver. 18, 19*, signified that he had not contradicted one time what he said another, but had kept to the same thing. This chapter, particularly *ver. 3 to 8*, furnishes matter of consolation to all good Christians in time of sorrow and affliction; for the GOD of *all comfort* will comfort them, as the members of CHRIST.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 14. Observe, that St. Paul here goes on with his kind assurances to the Corinthians, and he orders them to receive again into the Church, the sinner whom in his former Epistle (See chap v.) he had commanded them to excommunicate. Take notice, *ver. 11*, of what is said concerning *Satan*, and resolve to guard against his devices.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe here, that the Gospel even when preached by an Apostle had not the same effect upon all men. To some it was *the savour of death*, or an occasion of condemnation, because by despising and rejecting it, they

became more wicked and exposed themselves to the danger of eternal death. To others it was *the savour of life*, or the means of their everlasting salvation, because they embraced it willingly, and complied with the terms of it. And thus it will ever prove to the end of the world.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter St. Paul draws a comparison betwixt the law of Moses and the Gospel, and shews that the latter is more excellent than the former, because the law of Moses was not capable of giving life, and was not always to remain in force; whereas the Gospel was spiritual and everlasting, giving eternal life; from whence the Apostle concludes, that none but those who embrace the Gospel are truly enlightened, and enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The Apostle says all this to defend the doctrine he had preached against those teachers who opposed him, under the pretence of great zeal for the law of Moses. *Ver. 5*, the doctrines which the Apostles taught, they never could have known without the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 13, 14*. Till the Gospel was preached, the Jews could not fully understand the sacrifices and ordinances of the Mosaic law; and the Jews of the present day are in a still greater degree of darkness when the law is read, because they have rejected the Gospel, which alone can enlighten their minds. Observe *ver. 16*, the promise to the Jews. *Ver. 18*, though this may in some sort be said of good Christians in general, it was particularly applicable to the Apostles.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter St. Paul continues to speak of the courage and constancy of himself and the other true ministers of Christ, and of their sincerity and firmness. Observe, *ver. 3, 4*, that if the *Gospel is hidden* from any to whom it has been preached according to the doctrine of the Apostle, it is only to those *who are lost*, on account of their preferring those things which Satan, the God of worldly-minded people, has tempted them to prefer to eternal things. But we must not suppose that the blindness they are under was inflicted upon them without any fault of their own; it was sent, because

because they refused to come to the light, not choosing to be reproved or to change their wicked course. *Ver. 6, 7.* Observe for what purpose the minds of the Apostles were illuminated, namely, that they might impart light to others. *Ver. 7.* By *earthen vessels*, the Apostle meant *earthly bodies*. It was a most astonishing thing, that human beings should possess such knowledge of divine things, as the Apostles had. Observe, *ver. 8, &c.* what troubles, sorrows, and perplexities the Apostles endured; and, *ver. 14 to the end*, with what reflections they comforted themselves; which may be applied by all good Christians, while they strive to follow the example of the Apostles in faith, patience, and perseverance, keeping their minds steadfastly fixed on eternal things, and taking care not to set their hearts on temporal things.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter contains very useful instruction.

Observe, *ver. 1*, which shows that there is another and a better state prepared for the faithful; *our earthly tabernacle*, means our present earthly body; the *building of God* means the celestial body; (*see 1 Cor. chap. xv, ver. 40.*) *Ver. 2.* *Groaning in the spirit*, signifies an earnest desire of eternal glory; but observe that the Apostle earnestly as he desired this glory did not give way to an impatient wish to be *unclothed*, or to get rid of his mortal body; but only desired to be clothed with the celestial body, when the time came for his being unburdened from the earthly one. *Ver. 9* shows what all Christians ought to do, namely, to perform their duty in that state of life in which God has placed them, that they may find acceptance at the great day of accounts, of which the Apostle speaks positively. *Ver. 10.* Remember this text, and be persuaded by the Apostle to prepare for the awful sentence which will then be passed upon you. Observe what the Apostle says, *ver. 14, 15*, which shows that in consequence of Adam's sin *all men* were subject to everlasting death; and that Christ died for *all*; but that those only will have the benefit of his death, who, knowing the Gospel, lead such lives as the Gospel requires. *Ver. 17*, to be *in Christ*, is to be taken into covenant with God, through JESUS CHRIST, by baptism. Those who are baptized in the name

of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST by the ministers of CHRIST, are regarded as *dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness*; they are *new creatures*, their former defilement from original and actual sin is done away; they are reconciled to God. *Ver. 20.* Observe in what light the ministers of Christ, the Apostles, were to be regarded, namely, as no less than *ambassadors sent by CHRIST*, to persuade those to whom they were sent, to become Christians, that they might be reconciled to God. The writings of the Apostles should therefore have great weight with us; and all the true ministers of the Gospel should be looked upon in the same light, as ambassadors of CHRIST, when they use the Apostle's arguments for the conversion of sinners. *Ver. 21, Christ's being made sin for us*, signifies, that Christ made an offering of himself, and suffered the *punishment* of sin in our stead.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter, St. Paul, after showing with what zeal, integrity, and charity, he had performed the duties of his apostolic office under the most trying circumstances, calls upon the Corinthians to make a pure profession of christianity, and to avoid all fellowship with idolators, either by marriage, or by being present at their heathen sacrifices and feasts. The Apostle's advice is applicable in a great measure to all christians; for every one ought to keep to the doctrine of the Apostles, and to shun as much as possible the society of ungodly persons.

Ver. 1. The ministers of the Gospel may be said to *work with CHRIST*, when they earnestly try to persuade men to repent and be reconciled to God. *Ver. 2.* The Apostle here quotes a text from the *Prophecy of Isaiah, chap. xlix, ver. 8*, which related to the times of the Gospel. *Ver. 7.* The *armour of God* is described in the *Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. vi. ver. 11 &c.* *Ver. 8.* *As deceivers and yet true*, mean looked upon as deceivers, though by no means so. *Ver. 12* shows the great affection which the Apostle had for the Corinthians. *Ver. 13.* He calls for their love in return. By *Belial* we are to understand *infidels*, those who set themselves entirely against the christian religion. With these, a Christian should hold no fellowship. There are many of these people in the world

world at the present time, pretending to more wisdom than the rest of mankind, and trying to corrupt others by every means in their power, particularly by their writings. Christians should therefore be strongly on their guard, in respect to the books they read. These *infidels* may be considered as the *idolaters* of the present age, for they set up *human reason* as their idol, in opposition to the *wisdom of God in the scriptures*. Reflect on the Apostle's question, *ver. 16*, and the promise of God. Observe the admonition *ver 17*, and if through want of thought, you have got into an infidel family, *come out of it without delay*, whatever worldly advantages you may be obliged to sacrifice. And you may depend upon it, if you do so from a truly christian principle, the promise of the Lord, *ver. 18*, will be fulfilled to you.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1. The promises here meant, are those in the foregoing chapter, *ver. 16, 18*. By *filthiness of flesh and spirit*, are meant all uncleanness, intemperance, and idolatry. By *perfecting holiness in the fear of God* is to be understood, improving more and more in godliness.

Ver. 2 to the end. These verses show the great comfort which the Apostle had in the midst of his afflictions, though they were very severe ones. *Ver. 6, 7.* Titus brought word to St. Paul that his First Epistle had convinced them of the faults for which he had reproved them in his First Epistle. *Ver. 8.* The Apostle did not repent having grieved them with his letter, though he had been sorry at having had occasion to send such a one. *Ver. 9, 10.* Observe what St. Paul says concerning repentance. *Godly sorrow* is that which true penitents feel for having offended against God's holy laws, and which makes them resolve to amend their lives. The *sorrow of the world*, is that which the worldly-minded feel for the disappointments and troubles of life, which has killed many. Remember that *godly sorrow* is not *repentance*, but it leads to it. There is no true repentance without a change of life. Observe, *ver. 11*, the lively description which the Apostle gives of the godly sorrow of the Corinthians; and how kindly he comforted and encouraged them.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter relates chiefly to the collection mentioned in the *First Epistle*, chap. xvi. which was made for the Christians of Judea, to which which we find, *ver.* 1, 2, the Churches in Macedonia had liberally contributed; and the Apostle here calls upon the Corinthians to do the same, informing them, that he had sent *Titus* and another person, supposed to be *St. Luke*, to fetch it.

We learn from this chapter, that alms-giving is pleasing to GOD; that in works of charity, GOD chiefly regards the readiness and good-will of those by whom they are performed; and that those who have been relieved, should be ready to relieve others when it is in their power to do it.

CHAPTER IX.

The Apostle here in order to induce the Corinthians to be bountiful, sets before them the blessing which charitable people may expect from GOD, and the good effects which charity produces, in the glory of GOD, and the edification of the Church. Observe *ver.* 6, which may be considered as a promise from GOD, that he will send blessings on those who are bountiful to others. *Ver.* 7. Observe the *rule of charity* in this verse. Also, *ver.* 9, 10, 11, the Apostle's remark and prayer. *Ver.* 14 shows that those who are relieved by charity should pray for their benefactors.

CHAPTER X.

The design of St. Paul in this and the following chapter, was to defend himself against those who endeavoured to render him contemptible to the Corinthians, and to let them all know the power which as an Apostle he had over them; and we should learn from it to reverence our ministers, whose power over us, though not equal to that of the Apostles, is derived from the same source; for the ministry of the former is the very same which the Apostles received from CHRIST, and which has been conveyed down from them to us, in the way ordained by Christ, namely, by the laying on of the hands of the highest order of ministers, accompanied with suitable prayers.

CHAPTER XI.

St. Paul goes on here to defend and justify himself against the aspersions of his enemies, which compelled him to make mention, though against his will, of the gifts and graces with which God had endued him, and of what he had done for the Corinthians.

Ver. 1 to 16. By *his folly*, *ver. 1*, the Apostle meant the foolishness that his enemies imputed to him. *Ver. 2.* He was *jealous* or fearful lest the false Apostles should draw his converts away from CHRIST. *Ver. 3.* The *simplicity that is in CHRIST*, signifies the pure doctrine of the Gospel. *Ver. 6,* St. Paul was far from being *rude in speech*, though his enemies probably called him so. *Ver. 7, 8.* Though when he preached at Achaia, the Apostle maintained himself by tent-making, in other places he received a stipend, which shows that ministers have a right to claim a maintenance. *Ver. 13, 14, 15.* Observe what St. Paul says of those who set themselves up as Apostles, without being so in reality; and to whom he compares them, which should make us very cautious not to regard every person as a *minister of Christ*, who pretends to be one.

Ver. 16 to the end. The false Apostles had probably boasted that they were superior to St. Paul, he therefore shows, *ver. 22*, that he was equal to these Jewish teachers in respect to his descent from Abraham, and greatly their superior, as the minister of CHRIST, on account of the sufferings he had endured for the sake of the Gospel. Observe particularly what he says of these sufferings, *ver. 23, to 29*, and consider whether St. Paul would willingly have submitted to all this, (instead of being employed by the high priest with authority as he formerly was in persecuting the Christians,) if he had not believed in Christ. *Ver. 28, 29.* The *care of the Churches*, feeling as he did when any thing went wrong in them, was doubtless a great burden to his mind and spirits. By saying, *ver. 30*, that he *would glory in his infirmities*, the Apostle must be understood to mean, that he did not wish to ascribe his having been able to bear them, to his own *natural strength and fortitude*, but that he considered them as proofs of God's favour, and approbation of him as an Apostle. The escape

escape mentioned *ver.* 33, was a very remarkable one; there is an account of it in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER XII.

St. Paul here shows the great advantage he had over the false Apostles who opposed him, in the *visions* with which he was favoured; and strong proofs they certainly were to him that he was really *called of God to be an Apostle*, and that the doctrine he taught was *heavenly*. What he meant *ver.* 7, by *the thorn in the flesh*, is not now to be understood any farther, than that it was some great infirmity which served to remind him of his natural weakness as a human being; whatever it was, we find, *ver.* 9, that by the grace of God he was enabled to *bear it*, and this he regarded as an earnest to him of the divine favour. The best people have generally some great infirmity, and they should regard it in the same light as the Apostle did, and pray to God, if he should not see fit to deliver them from it, to enable them to bear it. From what St. Paul says, about *taking pleasure in infirmities, &c. glorying in reproaches, &c.* some people have been led to think that they should be always talking of their own weaknesses, and that they should court persecution, by going into the way of ill treatment: this was not done by the Apostles; on the contrary, they followed the Lord's injunction, "*When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another;*" but the malice of their enemies pursued them wherever they went. Neither is it to be expected, that because St. Paul and Titus, for particular reasons, did not chuse to receive any thing from the Churches of Achaia, all the ministers of the Gospel are to maintain themselves by their manual labour; for this cannot be done consistently with the duties of their holy profession. Even the Apostles found it expedient to derive a part of their support from the Church, and the itinerant preachers, the false Apostles of the present day, who are for the most part *poor men*, are supported by their followers. Observe *ver.* 20, the things which the Apostle names as likely to disturb the peace of the Church, and resolve to avoid every thing of the kind. It must be a great grief to every truly christian minister to see the people committed to his care go wrong.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1 to 5. What the Apostle here threatened was upon the supposition that he should find things going on according to the fears expressed in the last chapter, in which case he meant to use his apostolic power for their chastisement.

Ver. 5 to 11. By *reprobates*, *ver. 5*, we are to understand, not persons *predestinated before they came into the world* to lead wicked lives, and to be finally condemned to eternal misery, (for blessed be God! there never were, nor ever will be such) but, persons who have rejected the offer of salvation through Christ, on the terms of *faith* and *repentance*, and despised the help of the HOLY SPIRIT, from whom God, for these causes has withdrawn his grace, and left them to follow their own wicked inclinations. Probably the enemies of the Apostles had spoken of them as *reprobates*; it is a title often given to those who know by the *faith* that is in them, and their love for God, that they are not so.

Ver. 11 to the end. Every Christian should endeavour to follow the Apostle's excellent advice, *ver. 11*, and the readiest way to do so will be found to keep steadily to the *established Church*, which admits of its members being of *one mind*, as it requires *unity of faith and worship*. This Church contains the full and perfect doctrine of the Gospel, and great peace and comfort is to be found in it, from the particular blessing that attends it. The mode of salutation recommended *ver. 12*, was a common expression of kindness and respect in the Apostle's days. *Ver. 14* is a truly apostolic prayer, and it is very properly adopted by the ministers of the Church in behalf of their congregation, at the conclusion of their sermons.

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

IN this Epistle St. Paul opposes those who taught, that in order to be saved, it was not enough to *believe in JESUS CHRIST*, but that it was necessary also to *observe all the ceremonies of the law of Moses*. The Apostle proves that Christians are justified by *faith* alone, without being obliged to the observance of any these ceremonies.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. The words *not of man, neither by man, &c.* signify that the Apostle received the Gospel from JESUS CHRIST himself. *Ver. 6.* By *another Gospel*, St. Paul meant the doctrine of those who taught that Christians must do the works of the law of Moses, offering the sacrifices &c. Observe, *ver. 11, 12*, what the Apostle asserts of the Gospel he taught, which could be no other than the *truth* as he received it from our LORD himself. *Ver. 15.* St. Paul's being *separated from his birth* to be an Apostle, may be considered as a proof of the wonderful *foreknowledge of God*; for he was from his great zeal a fit instrument for the propagation of the Gospel. His being *called* to this office, in a miraculous manner, was an *act of grace* to him, for had he not been so called, he would have continued a persecutor of the Christians, not from a wicked principle, but from the mistaken notion he had taken up from the Pharisees, that it was his duty to maintain the law of Moses, and that he *ought* to oppose the religion of CHRIST, *see Acts chap. xvi. ver. 9.* Observe, *ver. 16 to the end*, that St. Paul was not only converted, but he received full instructions from the LORD himself, concerning all the principles of the christian religion, not from the other Apostles.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter St. Paul shows that as the Apostle of the Gentiles he kept firm to the doctrine, that there was no occasion for those who were baptized into the christian faith to conform to the Jewish law; and that he blamed St. Peter for giving way in this matter.

Ver.

Ver. 1. Observe that St. Paul travelled about for a number of years, preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, before he went back to Jerusalem. *Ver. 2.* By *revelation*, meant by the immediate direction of the HOLY GHOST. The *uncircumcision*, *ver. 7*, meant the Gentiles nations; the *circumcision*, *ver. 8*, the Jews.

Ver. 16 to the end. The works of the law, *ver. 16*, were undoubtedly the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses; the faith of CHRIST, signified a firm belief in what is revealed in Scripture concerning Jesus Christ, as the Son of God the Saviour of the world. This is the faith which is reckoned as righteousness to those who are led by it to keep the commandments of God. Those who have this faith are said to be *justified* by it, because they are regarded as just persons in the sight of God, on account of the sacrifice of atonement which Christ has made for the sins of the world. To such persons the works of the law of Moses are not necessary, because the law of the Gospel is put in the place of the old law. *Ver. 20* signifies that the Apostle who was once a Jew, had testified this justifying faith, by being baptized in the name of the LORD JESUS; in consequence of which, he was no longer a Jew, but a Christian, and bound to live according to the faith he had professed in the Redeemer, who died for him and for all mankind.

Unlearned persons should be very cautious how they apply this chapter, for it is a very difficult one, and many have been led by a false interpretation of some verses of it into great errors concerning *justification by faith*, as if those who believe in Christ, are not obliged to do any kind of good works. It is true, that no good works we are capable of doing can purchase salvation for us, for we cannot possibly make amends to God for the offences we commit against his holy laws; but as God in his mercy has accepted the sacrifice of Christ, as the price of the redemption of all mankind, we are *Christ's*, we are our *Saviour's property*; he can give eternal life to whomsoever he pleases, but he has promised to give it to those only, who, with a true faith in the sacrifice he has made for them, do the works he has commanded and taught them both by precept and example.

CHAPTER III.

St. Paul here blames the Galatians for departing from that doctrine which they had before received, and which teaches that men are justified by faith in Christ without the works of the law of Moses. This is also a very difficult chapter for the unlearned to comprehend, because it relates to questions between the Jewish and Gentile converts in the beginning of Christianity, the occasion of which has long ceased; but we may learn from it that it shows great folly and great blindness to turn aside from the truth after we have known it; that the wonderful gifts of the HOLY GHOST, which were bestowed upon the first Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, prove the doctrine of the Gospel to be truly divine, and that it is far more excellent than the law of Moses. We should also observe that the proofs St. Paul produces to show that it is by *faith in CHRIST* men are justified, are taken from the example of Abraham; from the promise God had made to that patriarch; from the curses which the law of Moses denounced upon those who sinned against it; and from the time when the law was given. Remember that the blessing given to Abraham related to a covenant made with Man after the Fall, when the LORD said *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, which *seed* meant CHRIST; and CHRIST was also the *seed of Abraham*, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. All nations were therefore interested in this covenant, which the law of Moses was far from disannulling; it was only *added* to it to keep the people of God separate from the heathen nation till the *seed*, that is CHRIST, should come to confirm the covenant made in the beginning and renewed to Abraham. Observe, *ver. 22*, that it was for the gracious purpose of general salvation that *all mankind* were reckoned *sinners* in consequence of Adam's transgression; unless they had *all* been so included in his offence they could not all have had an interest in Christ, for the design of our Lord's coming in our nature was to *restore* what Adam had forfeited. Observe also, *ver. 24*, that the *end* of the law of Moses was to show the necessity of faith in a Mediator, as the law so far from saving the world, condemned it. Observe, *ver. 26*, that all who have faith in CHRIST

JESUS

JESUS are reckoned to have *put on Christ*. Also, *ver. 28, 29*, that in respect to the privileges of the Gospel there is no distinction of persons; but those who like Abraham believe the promises of God, concerning the *seed*, namely Christ, and in consequence of this faith obey the commandments of God, are heirs with Abraham to the inheritance which he looked for in the kingdom of heaven; *see Hebrews, chap. xi.*

CHAPTER IV.

The general design of this chapter is to instruct us in the difference betwixt Jews and Christians, and to show how happy we are as living in the times of the Gospel, and having been adopted of God to be his children through faith in CHRIST.

Ver. 6. *Crying Abba, Father*, signifies being encouraged to address God as our Father. *Ver. 9.* *Weak and beggarly elements* mean the ceremonies of the Jewish law, which are called so because they have no power in themselves to give salvation. *Ver. 14.* The Apostle seems to allude here to that great infirmity to which he was subject, and which, in the former Epistle, he compares to a "*Thorn in the flesh*;" *see 2 Cor. xii. ver. 7.*

Ver. 22 to the end. What is said concerning Sarah and Hagar represents, in an allegorical manner, the difference between the *Covenant of the Law* and that of the GOSPEL; showing that the one was *bondage*, the other *freedom*.

If the Galatians were to blame in desiring, after they were freed by JESUS CHRIST from the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, to be again under its yoke, Christians are still more so, who, after having the knowledge of the blessings of the Gospel, set their hearts and affections on the things of this world. Those who do so remain *under the bondage of sin and Satan*, instead of enjoying the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*.

Those who set the Galatians against St. Paul, whom they once loved most affectionately, made the same kind of pretence which is now often urged against the regular ministers of the Church, namely, that *his doctrine was unsound*, that *he did not preach the Gospel*. If an Apostle met with this treatment, we are not to wonder that the present ministers of the Church should be so used; but those who desert and vilify their

their proper pastors will be called to account for it at the last day.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 16. In these verses the Apostle plainly shows that Christians are not obliged to observe *circumcision* nor the other ceremonies of the Jewish law; and he declares in the clearest and most positive manner that *justifying faith* operates by *love* and *good works*; and that we ought not to take occasion from the doctrine of *justification by faith*, and our *Christian liberty*, to live in a sinful course. By *all the law*, *ver. 14*, we are to understand the moral law, the *Commandments* of the second Table concerning our duty to our neighbour; which are, as our Saviour before taught, comprized in *one great commandment*, namely, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*.

Ver. 16 to the end. In these verses the Apostle shows the great difference there is betwixt those who *walk in the spirit*, or follow the good desires which the Holy Spirit puts into the hearts of the faithful; and those who *fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, that is, indulge the sinful desires which the devil puts into the hearts of those who do not guard against his temptations, by yielding themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These two things are certainly *contrary the one to the other*, so that those who are *led by the spirit* cannot do the *works of the flesh*; neither can those who are *led by the flesh* bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. What the Apostle meant by the *works of the flesh*, we read *ver. 19 to 22*. Observe the declaration at the end of *ver. 21*. What the *fruits of the spirit* are we read *ver. 22, 23*. By *crucifying the flesh with the affections thereof*, we may understand resolving with the aid of divine grace to get the better of every evil inclination and passion which we find in our hearts. Observe the injunction in the last verses of the chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 6. In these verses the Apostle instructs *spiritual men*, that is the *ministers of CHRIST*, not to despise or undervalue their Christian brethren, but to remember that without charity they themselves would be of no estimation in the sight of God; see *1 Cor. chap. xiii.*

Ver.

Ver. 6 to 9. In these verses the Apostle instructs those that are *taught* how to behave to their teachers, and shows that Christians ought to provide for their pastors. *Ver. 8.* To *sow to the flesh*, means to have a regard to nothing but our worldly interests. To *sow to the spirit*, is to have a regard to the things of eternity. Observe the different effects of these.

Ver. 9, 10. Observe what the Apostle says here, which equally concerns those who *teach* and those who are *taught*. By *those of the household of faith* are meant Christians. Observe, that though we should give a preference to our Christian brethren we are not to confine our charitable disposition and kind actions to them alone; but to consider all mankind as our neighbour, to whom our Saviour has taught us to do as we would be done by.

Ver. 11. The Apostle here gives, in few words, the sum and substance of this Epistle, namely, that GOD will not consider whether a man be a Jew or Gentile, but will require *all* who, by being baptized into the faith of CHRIST, have had a *new birth unto righteousness* to be *new creatures*; to live not according to the *fleshly appetites* of the corrupt nature they inherit from Adam, but according to the godly notions of the HOLY SPIRIT in their hearts, and the written word of GOD in the Gospels and Epistles.

Ver. 12. The persons who *troubled them* were those of whom the Apostle complains in *chap. i. ver. 7, 8*, of this Epistle.

Ver. 15. Observe the cautions in this verse.

Ver. 16. The *Israel of God* mean true believers, whether of the race of Jacob or not.

Ver. 17. The *marks of the Lord Jesus*, signified the wounds and bruises which St. Paul had borne for the sake of CHRIST.

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

THE Apostle wrote this Epistle when he was a prisoner at Rome, to the church at Ephesus, which he himself had founded in that city.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. The *saints* in Ephesus were the Christians in that city; the *faithful in Jesus Christ*, signified the Christians in all parts. *Ver. 3.* By *spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, we may understand such spiritual graces and blessings as are named, *ver. 2*, which God bestows upon the faithful, together with the promise of an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. *Ver. 4.* The Apostle speaks of the Ephesians as *chosen in Christ*, because God had determined before the foundation of the world that he would *pardon, sanctify, and justify* all who should, on the Gospel being preached to them, repent of their sins and be baptized into the Christian Covenant; and this *determination* which the Almighty, from his foreknowledge was able to make, is called God's *predestinating* the faithful to the adoption of children, and to an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven; none, however, are so predestinated but those whom God *foreknew* would continue faithful to the end of their lives. And we must consider the determined adoption, and the providing an eternal inheritance for such persons as proceeding entirely from the *good pleasure of God*, according to the plan he had graciously formed for the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ, for no human beings could have claimed them as their right.

Ver. 12 to 15. The Apostles were the first who trusted in Christ for salvation, and they were accordingly the first to be *sealed*, as St. Paul calls it, with the HOLY GHOST; which they were, in a very wonderful manner, on the day of Pentecost, as an earnest to them that a heavenly inheritance was provided for them. Not only the Apostle, but all the first Christians, were sealed in like manner; and every one who is baptized in the name of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, is also sealed; he is made a child of God, and an inheritor

heritor of the kingdom of heaven, and should be very thankful to God for his grace and mercy through JESUS CHRIST; but the adoption and the inheritance may be forfeited, as many who slight them will find to their everlasting confusion when it is too late. GOD's foreknowing whether any one will by faith and good works make his *calling and election sure*, (as the Apostle expresses it in another place) has no effect upon his will; he is free either to be led by the Holy Spirit, or to follow the desires of the flesh and the temptations of the devil after life and death have been set before him. To those who, after having been baptized, sincerely desire to do their duty, God gives the graces for which the Apostle prays, *ver. 17, &c.*

Observe, *ver. 20, 21*, what the Apostle says of the dignity of CHRIST and his power; also, that CHRIST is the head of the church, which is to be considered as his body.

This very sublime chapter should lead us to reflect on the astonishing privileges which are conveyed to us by the Christian Covenant, and to pray to God to strengthen and enlighten us more and more with his Holy Spirit; but let us very carefully avoid the dangerous error, which has lately spread in the world to an alarming degree, that every *individual person* has been *predestinated* either to eternal glory or eternal torment before he was created; for this would render the promises of GOD to the faithful and obedient, and his threatenings to the wicked and impenitent, of no effect. *Repentance*, also, which the Gospel constantly requires, is *nothing*, according to the doctrine of *absolute predestination*, for it can be of no benefit to any one; and the sacrifice of CHRIST would have been unnecessary if the fate of every individual had been predetermined, in the manner supposed, before they came into existence. But it is a great comfort to be assured that for all whom God *foreknew* from the beginning *would be faithful*, he has provided an heavenly inheritance which no creature on earth, nor all the malice of the devil, can hinder him from enjoying hereafter. We also understand from Scripture that when it pleased God, in his grace and mercy, to provide for the everlasting happiness of every one of the faithful, he also assigned a portion in hell to every one of those whom he *foreknew* would be *reprobate*, that is, despisers of

his offered grace; but it will be his own fault if any one suffers the torments of hell: for none but those who cut themselves off from the divine favour by their abominable wickedness will be sent to that dreadful place. It is therefore very presumptuous in any one to fancy himself elected from all eternity as a child of God, and an heir of glory, in any other way than this; and a great affront to a good and merciful God, who is described by our Saviour as our Father, to suppose that he has absolutely reprobated any of his creatures.

CHAPTER II.

At the time the Ephesians were called by the preaching of the Apostle to embrace the Gospel, they were in a dreadful state of corruption, given up to idolatry, and to the practice of all kinds of wickedness, doing the work of the devil, and following the lusts of the flesh; and they were by nature subject to the wrath of God, for original sin, never having had a new birth unto righteousness. In this state of ignorance and corruption, God, according to his eternal purpose to admit the Gentiles into his church, extended his mercy to them, and offered them salvation through repentance and faith in CHRIST JESUS; not on account of any former works of theirs, but of his own free grace, and on their complying with the conditions on their part, that is, on their testifying their repentance and faith in the Redeemer, by being baptized in his name, they were *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*; that is, they had a new birth unto righteousness, and were bound to forsake idolatry and all wickedness, and lead a pure and holy life. The Apostle therefore calls upon the Ephesians and all the Gentile converts whom his Epistle should reach, to remember what they had formerly been, namely *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, (which, till the law of Moses was abolished, was the church of God) and strangers to the Covenant respecting the Redeemer, without hope of future happiness, and without the knowledge of God in this world; and to reflect on the happy change that God had made in their condition, by receiving them into covenant with himself through Jesus Christ, who had brought those together into one body or church, who

had

had long been divided, namely, Jews and Gentiles, and reconciled them to each other as well as to God; so that henceforth they should as fellow Christians live in love and charity.

Observe, *ver. 16*, that this reconciliation with God and each other was effected by the *cross of Christ*, that is, his *crucifixion*, which was the sacrifice God required for the sins of mankind, and which gave peace both to Jews and Gentiles on the same conditions and with the same privilege. Observe, *ver. 19*, what invaluable advantages the Gentiles derive from being taken into covenant with God through Christ; and remember that our own nation was a heathen one at the time St. Paul wrote this Epistle, but that it has for many years been a Christian one. Remember also, that you are by baptism a *citizen of the kingdom of heaven*, that is, you have a chartered title by the grace of God to an inheritance in this kingdom because you belong to the household of God, you have been made the *child of God* by adoption of grace. But you will forfeit this inheritance, and all the blessings provided for the children of God and the citizens of the eternal kingdom, if you do not lead a Christian life.

Ver. 20 to the end. Observe, that the Christian church is here compared to a beautiful building, fitly framed together, complete in all its parts, an *holy temple*, an *habitation of God through the Holy Spirit*; and remember that no one can make a part of this holy temple, unless he resolves to maintain a firm faith in Christ, according to the doctrine of the holy Apostles, and lead a virtuous life.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 12. The Apostle calls himself the *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, because he had been cast into prison for preaching the Gospel. In the following verses he speaks of the *great mystery*, or *secret thing*, that had been revealed to him from heaven, namely, the calling of the Gentiles into the church; which mystery he had preached to the Ephesians, having been ordained by CHRIST himself to be an Apostle to the Gentile nations. Observe, *ver. 8*, that the Apostle calls himself *less than the least of all the saints*, because he had formerly persecuted the church of CHRIST; but though he thought thus humbly of himself he was not so in reality.

Ver. 13 to 20. If the Apostle had not encouraged his converts they would have been disheartened at his imprisonment and persecution. Observe, in the following verses, the blessings and graces which St. Paul besought God to grant to the Ephesians, for these are the things Christians should desire to have.

Ver. 20 to the end. These verses should lead us to reflect on the astonishing wisdom and goodness of God, and to ascribe glory to him for his goodness to us as members of his church.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 7. To walk worthy of the vocation with which they were called, and to endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, signified to live in piety and unity as the adopted children of God ought to live, that is, as one great family of which God is the father; always remembering that as there is only one SPIRIT there can properly be but one *body*, and that therefore all the members of the church, having the same hope of spiritual blessings here, and of an eternal inheritance in the same heavenly kingdom hereafter, they should, while on earth, agree in the same faith, acknowledging one LORD JESUS CHRIST, and conforming to the same *baptism*, and other ordinances of the Christian religion.

Ver. 7. In order to produce this *unity*, or perfect agreement, every separate member (the Apostle observed) had a certain measure of grace, some spiritual gift afforded him, according to the pleasure of their LORD, that he might be serviceable to the body.

Ver. 8 to 11. In these verses the Apostle quotes a verse of the 68th Psalm, and applies it to our Saviour's ascension, observing, that before he *ascended*, or went up to heaven, he *descended*, or came down from thence, which shows that he was the SON of GOD.

Ver. 11 to 17. Observe, that among the gifts which our Saviour, after his ascension into heaven, gave unto men, are named *Apostles*, to reveal his will; *Prophets*, to explain the mysteries of the Gospel; *Evangelists*, to propagate the true faith to other nations; and *Pastors* and *Teachers* for the government and instruction of different congregations: and that

that this holy ministry was given for the purpose of *perfecting the body of the church*; from whence we may understand that without a Ministry ordained of CHRIST, the church would not have been complete; neither could any person have had power and authority to minister in holy things, but by the appointment of CHRIST as the head of the church. Observe, *ver. 13*, what the Apostle says concerning the unity of the church; and his caution, *ver. 14*, not to go after strange preachers, but to keep to those whom God had appointed over them; who would all preach the same doctrine, which is the only way to keep up the unity of the church, under Christ its head. *Ver. 16*, Observe the comparison in this verse, which shows how closely the members of the church should be united with each other.

Ver. 17 to 25. How the Gentiles *walked, or lived*, we may read in the *first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. The Ephesians, as Gentiles, being converted to the Christian faith, and having had, through the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, a new birth unto righteousness, in the Sacrament of Baptism, they were required to put off the *old man*; that is, to renounce all their former idolatry and wickedness, and to live according to their *new birth*, a holy religious life. Observe, that the Apostle addresses them as having the *power to do* the same wicked things after conversion as before; he does not say that they could never fall from grace, and that no sin would in future be imputed to them; but he proceeds to show them particularly how they are to put on the *new man*, that is, to be true Christians instead of wicked heathens.

Ver. 25. Lying is a shameful vice, and nothing is more likely to destroy the peace and unity of the church than for the members to *lie one to another*.

Ver. 26, 27. It is impossible for the meekest person in the world to help being angry sometimes. Anger becomes *sinful* when it leads to hatred and malice. The Apostle's rule to *put it out of the mind before we retire to rest*, will prevent all this; but those who go to bed angry are very likely to be tempted by the devil to take revenge, or to injure those who have offended them, which is what a Christian should never do.

Ver. 28. *Let him that stole, steal no more*, means him that

was guilty of this vice in his unconverted state ; this was said to those who had been heathens ; it is to be hoped that no one who knows what it is to be a Christian, will be guilty of theft. *Ver. 29. Corrupt communication*, signifies all sorts of indecent filthy conversation. *That which is good to the use of edifying*, means such discourse as will tend to improve those we converse with.

Ver. 30. Grieve not the spirit of God &c. means, do not provoke the spirit of GOD to be displeased with you, and to leave you to yourselves ; for no longer than He remains with you, will you be reckoned amongst those who will be redeemed at the last day.

Ver. 31, 32. Observe these verses, which clearly show how Christians should at all times behave to one another, and call to mind what our Saviour said about *forgiveness*, in his Sermon on the mount, *Matt. v.* and in his Discourse with Peter. *Matt. xviii.*

CHAPTER V.

This chapter is full of good practical advice suitable to all Christians.

Ver. 1. Having been adopted as the children of God, we should obey him as a father.

Ver. 2. *To walk in love as Christ hath loved us*, signifies to show all possible kindness to our fellow Christians. Reflect here on the wonderful love of CHRIST in offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. *A sweet smelling savour*, means a sacrifice pleasing to GOD.

Ver. 3. Observe here how crimes, which are very commonly committed in these days amongst those who call themselves Christians, are condemned. By *covetousness*, we are to understand not only the inordinate love of money, but *worldly mindedness in general* ; observe what the Apostle says of it.

Ver. 4. Observe here how the Apostle condemns, as being very unfit for Christians, that filthy foolish talking which many people delight in and reckon wit, while they forget to return thanks for the blessings they receive.

Ver. 5 to 9. Observe in these verses the dreadful hazard which those people run, who continue in the practice of the sins named here, no less than the forfeiture of their eternal inheritance

inheritance; and that it was on account of these things, the wrath of God was sent upon the heathen nations. If Christians partake with heathens in their crimes, they will assuredly share with them in their punishment, unless by a timely repentance they obtain forgiveness and remission of sin. *Children of darkness*, ver. 8, meant unenlightened heathens. *Children of light*, those who enjoy the light of the Gospel. How the latter are required to live is made clear to them in the writings of the *New Testament*, and much may be learnt from this chapter alone.

Ver. 9 to 14. *The fruits of the spirit*, signify good works, the very contrary of those which, ver. 11, are called *works of darkness*. *Ver. 12* Very horrid things were done by the heathens, under the name of *mysteries*, in their caves and secret places. The abomination of them was clearly shown by the doctrine of the Gospel.

Ver. 14 to 18. By those *that sleep*, may be understood those who live in a state of stupid indifference, in respect to the concerns of eternity. To *awake*, signifies to consider their danger, and give their earnest attention to it, before it be too late. *Walking circumspectly*, ver. 15, means, having a careful regard to our ways. None are so *foolish* as those who live without thought of their latter end; none so *wise* as those who prepare for it. *Ver. 16.* We cannot bring back the time that is past; *redeeming the time*, therefore must mean doing all that is in our power to prevent the evils which will fall upon us, if we continue to lead *foolish*, that is, wicked careless lives.

Ver. 18 to 22. Drunkenness is certainly a vice which no Christian should be guilty of. The heathens at their idolatrous feasts used to get drunk and sing lewd songs in honour of their idols. Instead of this, Christians at their religious assemblies should sing psalms and hymns to the praise and glory of God, not to gain the admiration of their hearers; and such as have not a *voice* for singing should at least join in heart with the rest. By *submitting yourselves one to another*, we may understand, keeping up that order and regularity among the whole body of Christians, which is necessary for preserving its unity.

Ver. 22 to the end. These verses relate to the duties of wives and husbands. They are very clear, excepting in regard

regard to the *mystery of Christ and his Church*, his union with which is often spoken of figuratively as a *marriage*; it will be understood at the end of the world. Observe, *ver. 31*, that the Apostle shows plainly that Christians were to follow the original law of marriage, given at the creation, *Gen. chap. ii. ver. 24*, and each man to have only one wife.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 5. The first two verses show, that Christians are to keep the *fifth commandment*, and they intimate that the original blessing is not taken away; but observe, the Apostle changes the word *land*, which to the Jews meant *Canaan*, for *earth*. *Fathers provoke their children to wrath* when they punish them with cruelty beyond measure; and neglect to shew tenderness towards them. *To bring them up in the nurture and fear of the LORD*, is to give them christian education, teaching them in their early years to fear GOD and keep his commandments, and instructing them in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures as they grow up.

Ver. 5 to 9. We have here the duty of christian servants; *to be obedient with fear and trembling*, signifies, to keep the fear of GOD always before their eyes, which will lead servants to pay obedience to their earthly masters so as to gain the approbation of their heavenly master. How to do this the Apostle teaches us; *singleness of heart*, means sincerity; *eye service*, is doing what will please a master in his sight, and neglecting it in his absence. The servant of CHRIST will not act in this deceitful manner; but will do his duty in every condition of life, with a view to a future state, knowing that should his faithful services to his earthly master not be rewarded by him, he will certainly be rewarded by his heavenly master for doing his duty as a Christian. *Ver. 9.* This verse shows, that those who are masters on earth will be called to a strict account in respect to the treatment they have given their servants; which should make them careful how they act towards them.

Ver. 10 to 13. The *armour of God* is mentioned, *Romans, chap. xiii. ver. 12.* and the Apostle here explains what is to be understood by it; but he first tells the Ephesians on what account they must put it on, namely, because they have a great spiritual warfare to maintain with the enemies of their souls.

souls, the devil and his angels, the princes and the powers of the air, as they are called in *chap. ii. ver. 1* of this Epistle.

Ver. 13 to 18, show what the armour of God is, namely, *Truth, Righteousness, the preparation of the Gospel of peace, Faith, the hope of salvation, and the word of God.* To be girt about with truth, is to have a constant regard to it in all our words and actions. To put on the breastplate of righteousness, is, to resolve to the best of our power to do our duty to God and man. To be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, means, to be ready to show gentleness, meekness, kindness, and long suffering to all men. To take the shield of Faith, is to have a confident hope that all the promises of the Gospel to the faithful will be fulfilled. To take the helmet of Salvation, is to be fully assured that if we behave and do what our Lord JESUS CHRIST requires of us, we shall certainly be saved in spite of all that the devil and his angels and wicked men may do to hinder our salvation. To take the sword of the Spirit, is to have recourse to the scriptures whenever we find ourselves under temptation. Being thus armed, we shall be prepared to resist the fiery darts of the devil, namely, the temptations of all our spiritual enemies. But in order to stand, or continue firm to the end of our lives, we must watch and pray, since the devil is always ready to take advantage of those who are negligent. Christians should also pray for the Church, and for their ministers. St. Paul as an Apostle, whose office it was to reveal mysteries, desired, *ver. 19*, that the Ephesians would pray for him that he might have utterance. The same kind of gift of extempore preaching is not wanting for the present ministers of the Gospel, as they have nothing now to reveal; it is sufficient that they be able to explain what the Apostles have written; but a certain degree of study and learning is necessary for this purpose, as the Scriptures were written in languages which are now dead, that is, not talked as common languages by any nation.

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

THIS Epistle was also written while St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 12. In these verses we should remark the zeal and perfect charity of the Apostle in the prayer he offered up for the people of Philippi. *Fellowship in the Gospel, ver. 5,* means their continuance in the faith and profession of the Gospel. *Things excellent,* are spiritual and heavenly things; to prefer these, is the only way to be without offence till the great judgment day.

Ver. 12 to 21. The Apostle here proceeds to inform the Philippians concerning his own affairs, and from the account he gives of the effect his imprisonment had in promoting the knowledge of the Gospel, we should be led to admire the ways of GOD's providence. At this time, St. Paul had liberty for preaching the Gospel to all who came to him, for two years, *see Acts chap. xxviii. ver. 30.* It seems, that some persons were envious of him, and opposed him; but whether Jews or professors of christianity is not known; these would not acknowledge him as an Apostle; but he comforted himself with an assurance, that CHRIST would be glorified in him either by his preaching, or by his dying as a martyr for the Gospel's sake.

Ver. 21 to 28. Observe in these verses, that the Apostle was perfectly prepared to lay down his life, should it be required of him, and that he felt a strong desire to be removed by any means GOD saw fit to a better world; but he checked all his impatience for the enjoyment of eternal things, when he considered that by a continuance in this world, he might still farther promote the joy and faith of those he had converted. Observe, *ver. 27,* the Apostle's injunction, which is suitable to all *Christians.*

Observe, *ver. 28 to the end,* that the Apostle here prepares the Philippians to expect persecution, and exhorts them to keep

keep in mind the example he set them. We should learn from this chapter to behave at all times in a manner worthy our christian profession, and never to suffer our faith to be staggered by afflictions, especially should we be called upon to bear them for the sake of CHRIST.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe here how earnestly the Apostle recommends to Christians to live in unity, and to be humble minded, endeavouring to promote the interests of one another.

Ver. 5 to 9. In these verses the Apostle, while he recommends the example of CHRIST's *humility*, strongly points out his *DIVINITY*. *Ver. 6.* In the early ages of the world, the *eternal Son of GOD* appeared as the *LORD GOD*; *ver. 7.* When he took upon him the nature of man, he *laid aside his glory*, he did not show himself as the *LORD GOD*, but taking our nature upon him, he appeared in *the form of a servant*, that he might make the sacrifice for sin, and redeem mankind from death and misery.

Ver. 9 to 12. That the *Son of GOD* should take our nature upon him is a wonderful mystery, the manner of which cannot be explained; but we must believe it as revealed to us from heaven; and we must remember that the same *JESUS CHRIST* who ascended up into heaven is both the *SON OF GOD*, and our *LORD*, and that we are to serve and worship him as such: by doing this we shall testify our Faith.

Ver. 12 to 14. By the Apostle's earnest exhortation to the Philippians; *ver. 12*, we may understand, that Christians have the power to do something towards securing the blessings of salvation after it has been freely offered to them of God. It is true, we cannot do good works without the *HOLY SPIRIT*; but we are free to choose whether we will be *led by the spirit*, to do the things that GOD has commanded, or whether we will *follow the desires of the flesh*, and be wicked. We must therefore be constantly upon our guard, lest we fall off from our duty and hinder our salvation.

Ver. 14 to 19. These verses teach us that while we are *working*

working out our own salvation we must keep from murmuring at the afflictions and disappointments we meet with, and avoid disputing with those who differ from us; keeping on in a steady course, continuing firm to our principles, and setting a good example, whatever may be the conduct of those we live amongst in the world. To hear that his converts pursued this course St. Paul said would give him joy at the day of the resurrection, and in the mean while encourage him to suffer martyrdom, should he be called upon to do so.

Ver. 19 to the end. Timotheus was Timothy, a young minister. Observe, *ver. 20*, the high opinion St. Paul entertained of him, and the attachment which Timothy had to the Apostle. Epaphroditus is supposed to have been the minister of the church at Philippi. Observe how the Apostle exhorted the Philippians to receive him.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 18. By *dogs*, *ver. 2*, the Apostle meant some false teachers who, it seems, wanted to persuade Christians to retain the rite of circumcision. The Apostle observes that he had once been a zealous maintainer of the Jewish law; but that he accounted it the highest happiness to have given it up for the Gospel; as he was convinced there was no righteousness to be had, but *through faith in Christ*. Observe, *ver. 8*, &c. the sentiments he entertained of the Christian religion. *Counting all things but loss*, &c. meant regarding them as of no value. Observe, *ver. 12*, that notwithstanding all that he had suffered, and all the zeal he felt for the success of the Gospel, the Apostle did not think himself *perfect*; but he thought it necessary to press forward continually in the Christian cause, not thinking of what he had done, but looking forward to what he still had to do, in order to work out his salvation; keeping constantly in view the great prize of the Christian calling, *everlasting life and happiness*.

Ver. 15 to the end. Observe, that the Apostle exhorts his converts to follow his example in this respect, and not to suffer themselves to be led away by *the enemies of the cross of Christ*, meaning those who opposed the doctrine of redemption by a crucified Saviour. *Having our conversation in heaven,*

heaven, *ver. 20*, signifies, living like those who look upon heaven as their country, from whence they hope and expect that their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will come at the last day, and raise them from the dead to a life of glory. Recollect, or read here the *fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, which describes in what manner our *vile bodies will be changed* at the resurrection.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 4. The persons mentioned, *ver. 4*, were probably *ministers*. By his *yoke-fellow*, the Apostle is supposed to have meant Epaphroditus, of whom he speaks in the *third chapter*. To be of the same mind, could only mean to be so in respect to the doctrines of religion. Observe, that *women* are spoken of as labourers in the Gospel; but we must remember that they could not be *preachers*, for women were forbidden to teach in the public assemblies. To be *written in the book of life*, we may understand being received as members of the church.

Ver. 4 to 10. Sincere good Christians have constant cause for *rejoicing*, in the hope of everlasting felicity. Religion was given for the comfort of life, not to make us gloomy and melancholy. By *moderation*, *ver. 5*, we are to understand the keeping all our passions and desires respecting the things of this life in due subjection, so as not to break God's commandments. *The Lord is at hand*, alluded to our LORD's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem for the sins of the Jews. Observe the Apostle's rule, *ver. 6*, and the happy effect of following it, *ver. 7*. It instructs us not to give way to anxious care, in times of danger and distress, but to have recourse to prayer. The greatest comfort that we can enjoy in this world is *the peace of God*: observe what St. Paul says of it. Observe also, *ver. 8, 9*, the things we should be attentive to, if we desire to have the peace of God here and everlasting happiness hereafter. See *John, chap. xiv. ver. 27*.

Ver. 10 to the end. It appears from these verses that the Philippians had helped St. Paul in his necessities, by sending him supplies, whilst he was a prisoner at Rome, which was a very good work. Observe, what he says respecting the happy state of his own mind, *ver. 11 to 14*. Every state of

life has its peculiar trials and temptations. To *be abased*, or cast down from affluence to a state of poverty, tempts many to be discontented, and to murmur at their hard lot. To *abound*, or to have abundance of the things of this life, often tempts the rich to place their happiness in the pleasures and enjoyment of this world, and to forget God. But the contented man is always happy ; and every one may be so who will, like the Apostle, seek help from his Saviour both in the time of prosperity and the time of adversity. If we consider the troubles and difficulties the Apostle had to struggle with, as described by himself in ii. *Corinthians*, chap. xi. ver. 24, those which Christians in general are called upon to endure will appear trifling ones. Let us then follow the example of the Apostle, and endeavour to be contented in every state of life in which the providence of God may place us. Observe, ver. 18, that St. Paul speaks of the gifts he had received from the Philippians as an offering made to God, and accepted, because they were bestowed upon the Apostle as the minister of JESUS CHRIST. From the salutation of *the saints in Cæsar's household*, it appears, that some of the persons who attended the Roman Emperor had embraced the Christian faith. Nero the Emperor, who reigned at this time, was a cruel persecutor of the Christians. During his confinement St. Paul made a great number of converts at Rome.

EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

THIS Epistle was likewise written during St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome.

CHAPTER I.

St. Paul, it seems, had not been at Colosse. The Christians there were converted by Epaphras, who had given the Apostle an account of them, which filled him with joy and thankfulness ; and he wrote this Epistle to confirm their faith, and warn them against false teachers. The doctrine and instruction in this chapter is for the most part easy to be understood by those who have studied the foregoing Epistles.

Observe,

Observe, *ver. 10*, how Christians ought to walk or live; and *ver. 11*, what GOD does for those who strive to live so. Consider, *ver. 12*, what an astonishing privilege it is to be made an heir to an eternal inheritance! and, *ver. 13*, from what a dreadful state mankind have been delivered through the redemption purchased for them by CHRIST. Observe, *ver. 14*, what we gain by the sacrifice Christ has made for us; and *ver. 15*, who this Saviour is who has done so much for us—no less than the ETERNAL SON OF GOD, the WORD, of whom St. John speaks in the first chapter of his Gospel, as the Apostle does here. Observe very particularly what is said of our Saviour in the verses that follow, and let the Apostle's exhortation to the Colossians, *ver. 23*, lead you to resolve to continue in the firm belief of all the Apostle has in this and his other Epistles taught concerning the *divinity* and the *dignity* of CHRIST, and the salvation wrought by him. There doubtless is great *mystery* in these doctrines, but Apostles have been inspired by the HOLY GHOST to reveal these things; and it is our highest interest as well as our duty to believe them on the credit of their word, which is, in fact, the *Word of God*; and if we do not believe all the articles of the Christian faith, we cannot expect to partake of the promised blessings. *Ver. 28*. To *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*, means to instruct them fully in the principles of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 8. Observe here, that the Apostle's care for the churches or societies of Christians extended to those whose members had not been converted by himself; and that the Epistles to these Christians were intended to supply the want of his bodily presence, by teaching them the common Faith, or those things in which they were all to agree in order to form one universal church, having Christ for the head of it. *Ver. 5* shows that the Colossians observed in this church the order that Christ himself had settled for the government and discipline of the church when he gave some *Apostles*, some *Prophets*, some *Evangelists*, some *Teachers*, some *Pastors*, for the perfecting and edifying of his body, the church; see *Ephesians, chap. iv. ver. 11, 12*. Observe, *ver. 2*, what strict union the Apostle recommended among Christians, both in

the practice of *love*, that is, *good works*; and in the belief of the mystery of redemption, which, though it is revealed in part, must remain hid in a great measure till our Saviour's second coming, when it will be fully understood.

Ver. 8 to 11. Pay particular attention to *ver. 8*; for in no times were Christians more in danger of *being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit* than at present; as there are in the world many persons who, under the name of *philosophers*, are industrious to spread infidelity, chiefly by means of books, in which every thing relating to the mystery of redemption is denied, and the resurrection from the dead treated as a fable or romance. Against such persons, and their writings, every Christian should be upon his guard. Observe, that the true way to prevent being seduced by infidels is to keep steadily to Christ and his Gospel, looking upon him as the Saviour of the world; and his doctrines (as they are to be found in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles) as the truth revealed from heaven, from which we are to take our *rule of faith*, and our *rule of life*.

Ver. 11 to 18. The Apostle, in these verses, puts the Colossians upon their guard against those teachers who preached that it was necessary to hold the ceremonies of the Mosaic law with the Christian faith. He shows, *ver. 11*, that the Rite of circumcision was abolished, and the Sacrament of Baptism ordained in its stead; in which those who are baptized receive remission of sins, and are no longer subject to the burden of the old law, but are freed from all its ordinances, the distinction of clean and unclean meats, the keeping of feasts at the new moons, &c. which were but types and shadows of the church of God, of which Christ is the head.

Ver. 18 to 20. Observe here, that the Apostle warns Christians not to introduce into religion vain superstitious ceremonies, such as the *worship of angels*, for though these ceremonies carry with them the appearance of religion they are offensive to Christ, the head of the church, to whom alone worship should be paid, because he is the eternal Son of God, and one with the Father; but angels are creatures: nor do those blessed spirits desire to be worshipped, as we may learn from *Revelations, chap. xxii. ver. 8, 9*.

Ver. 20 to the end. The ordinances to which Christians are *dead*, are those of the ceremonial law of Moses; but let us
remember

remember that the *moral law*, the *ten commandments*, was never abolished ; it still remains in force. We must therefore have a constant regard to our duty to God and our neighbour, or we shall not be good Christians.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 18. Observe, that the first verse refers to the Sacrament of Baptism, in which, as we read in the twelfth verse of the foregoing chapter, the baptized person is reckoned as *buried* with Christ, and *raised* through him to a new and spiritual life. Take particular notice that the Apostle addresses the Colossians, throughout the chapter, not as persons who were so entirely changed by their new birth, that they were past the possibility of sinning ; but he calls upon them, *ver. 2*, as *children of God*, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, to set their hearts upon heavenly things ; to *mortify* their earthly members, by abstaining from those vices for which the judgments of God were sent upon the heathens ; to *put off* their former evil habits, having solemnly engaged themselves, as new creatures, to lead a new life unto righteousness. And *ver. 12 to 15*, he calls upon them as *the elect people of God*, to *put on* all the Christian virtues ; to *let* the peace of God rule in their hearts, and the word of Christ dwell in them, &c. which expressions would not have been used if their own will had had nothing to do in respect to securing their everlasting inheritance : or if there was no possibility of falling off from grace, after having been renewed unto righteousness. *Ver. 16, 17*, signify that Christians should so order their conversation as to edify one another ; and that singing psalms and spiritual songs should not be made a common amusement, but a religious exercise and recreation.

Ver. 18 to the end. Observe, that in these verses a repetition is made of the same relative duties which the Apostle recommended to the practice of the Ephesians, and nearly in the same words.

CHAPTER IV.

The directions in this chapter are also the same in effect as are given in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Corinthians. *Ver. 6* signifies that the conversation of a Christian should be

mild and courteous, wise and discreet, so as to bring credit upon Christianity, and avoid giving offence.

The good character St. Paul gives in the latter part of this Epistle of Tychichus and others, who were all exemplary servants of God, shows that good and faithful ministers ought to be held in the highest estimation, and should be treated with the utmost affection and respect.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

THIS Epistle was, in order of time, the first of St. Paul's Epistles. There was no church mentioned by St. Paul, of which he speaks so highly as of that at Thessalonica. This city was the capital of Macedonia.

CHAPTER I.

Observe, throughout this chapter, with what comfort and joy the Apostle speaks of the conversion of the Thessalonians, and their continuance in the faith of Christ. Observe, *ver. 3*, what the Apostle esteemed *praise-worthy* in them; not their *faith* only, but their *good works*, their patience, and the hope they maintained in the midst of great afflictions. *Ver. 4* shows that assurance had been given them by the miracles wrought by the Apostles of the truth of the Gospel, and that they turned from idols to the living God, on which, through Baptism, no doubt, they received assurance of their being elected to a heavenly inheritance, and were confirmed by the gifts bestowed upon them in the hope of being finally put in possession of it, if they continued faithful unto the end. No one could be taken into the Christian covenant, even by an Apostle, without being baptized by a minister of the church.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 18. The Apostle alludes to what is related, *Acts, chap. xvi.* concerning the treatment he and Silas met with at Philippi from the magistrates, who were heathens. *Ver. 3.* The Apostle shows that his manner of teaching was very different from that of the heathen philosophers, who used a great deal of subtlety and art in their discourses, in order to gain the reputation of wisdom. He also reminds the Thessalonians of the
affection

affection he had testified towards them ; but we must not conclude from St. Paul's preaching to them without receiving any stipend, that all the ministers of Christ are required to do the same ; for, in other parts of Scripture, he plainly teaches that every congregation ought to maintain its minister ; but knowing the poverty of the churches of Macedonia he would not put them to expence on his own account ; *see ii. Corinthians, chap. viii. ver. 2, 3.* Observe, *ver. 15, 16*, that the Apostle looks upon the crucifying of our Saviour, and the persecution of himself and his brethren, as the *filling up of the measure of the iniquity of the Jews*, by which they would bring the wrath of God upon them, which agrees with our Saviour's words, *Matt. chap. xxiii. ver. 29 to the end.*

Ver. 18 to the end. By *Satan's hindering*, is to be understood that those who try to prevent the progress of the Gospel are to be considered as the instruments of the devil, because they do his work. Every faithful minister of Christ has joy when he sees that his ministry is successful, and that he does not labour in vain for the good of souls ; he may also rejoice on his own account, because he will be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven for his faithfulness and diligence.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. See an account of St. Paul's preaching at Thessalonica, and his afterwards staying at Athens, *Acts, chap. xvii.* *Ver. 4.* The Apostle knew from our Saviour that he was to suffer affliction and tribulation. Observe, *ver. 12*, that the love of Christians is not to be limited, but to extend to all mankind, that they may at all times be ready to obey our Saviour's golden rule, "*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them ; see Matt. chap. vii. ver. 12 ;* and to imitate the example of the good Samaritan ; *see Luke, chap. x. ver. 13.* Without this love and charity no one will be reckoned *unblameable and holy* at the last day. Remember that our Saviour says, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father who is in heaven, &c. ; see Matt. vii. ver. 21 to the end.* What these works are, we may gather from our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, in which he recommends the keeping the *Moral Law*, namely, the *Ten Commandments* ; and from the latter part of *Matthew, chap. 25*, and from many other parts

of his divine discourses; also, from the practical parts of all the Epistles. Never, therefore, should we listen to those who cry down good works as of no use to the *elect*, for there is no making our *calling and election* sure without them; though by such good works as we are able to do, we certainly could not have gained salvation without Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 13. Observe in these verses how strongly the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to be *chaste, pure, and honest* in their lives and conversation. Take notice, *ver. 6*, that honesty is not confined to those things which if a man was dishonest in, he would be punished by the law of the land, but that it extends even to the smallest concerns; *see that no man go beyond the strictest honesty in any matter.* And observe the reason which St. Paul gives, *ver. 7*, *why every one should be chaste and pure*; for how can we expect a God of purity and holiness to approve those who give themselves to vicious conduct and filthy conversation. Those who do so, the Apostle says, *ver. 8*, *despise God*, for they refuse to be led and governed by his Holy Spirit, who puts into the heart none but pure and holy desires. Observe, *ver. 9*, how highly St. Paul speaks of *brotherly love*; and remember that all mankind are our brethren, but our fellow Christians especially so. *Ver. 11* contains a rule which, if strictly followed, would prevent much of the disturbance which arises in society. We must not understand that those who can afford to keep servants should do their *household work* themselves, or work in their own *fields*, but that every one should do his own *proper business*, and not leave it to be done by others, or to go undone. *Ver. 12.* Those *which were without* meant the Gentiles. We learn from this verse that we are to act honestly even in our transactions with the wicked.

Ver. 1 to the end. By those *that are asleep*, the Apostle meant those who had died in the Christian faith. Observe what the Apostle says concerning them, and how comfortable his words are, especially to people who have lost their near relations. *Ver. 15* signifies that those who shall be in their graves at our Lord's *second coming*, will be raised, and experience the happy change described in the First Epistle to the
Corinthians,

Corinthians, as soon as those who shall be found alive; *see 1 Cor. chap. xv. ver. 51, &c.* Observe, that *ver. 16, 17*, of this chapter agree perfectly with what our Lord himself declared concerning his second coming, *see Matt. chap. xxiv. ver. 30, 31.*; and take notice, *ver. 18*, of the use we should make of the revelation in Scripture of these heavenly things. Those who reflect on them properly will be comforted both in the prospect of their own resurrection, and for the loss of their friends, which will be for a short time only.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 14. The first verses of this chapter refer to our Saviour's answer to St. Peter when he said, *Lord will thou now restore the kingdom to Israel*; *see Acts, chap. i. ver. 6*; and to his discourse concerning his second advent, *Matt. chap. xxix.* and they show that we should not indulge our fancies concerning the exact time of our Lord's coming to judgment, but only remember that it will be sudden, that we may keep ourselves prepared for it. *Ver. 5.* The Apostle called the Thessalonians the *children of light*, because they had cast off the idolatry and wickedness of the heathens, which is justly called *spiritual darkness*, and had taken the Gospel of Christ for their guide. *Ver. 6* alludes to those people who live in a state of thoughtless stupidity about the day of judgment, as if such a day would never come. This is the case, it is to be feared with the greatest part of the world. *Ver. 8* refers to *the armour of God*, which is described in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, *chap. v. ver. 9.* Do not suppose that a merciful God has appointed any *to wrath*, but those whom he *foreknew* would provoke him by their abominable wickedness, as the heathens and the unbelieving Jews did to a high degree in the Apostle's days; the Gospel was given for the salvation of *all* who would comply with the terms of it, namely, repent of their former sins, profess their faith in Christ by being baptized in his name together with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, and lead a holy life; *see Mark, chap. xvi. ver. 15, 16,* and *Matt. chap. xxviii. ver. 19, 20.* See also, *Ezekiel, chap. xviii.* which is sufficient of itself to convince us that God did not decree or predestinate any part of mankind to eternal misery; and that he has no pleasure in the everlasting death of the wicked. *Ver. 10.* Those *live and die to Christ*,

who continue to the end of their lives firm in his religion. *Ver. 11.* Christians *edify* one another when they converse together on subjects relating to their salvation, provided they keep to the true doctrine of the Gospel. *Ver. 12.* By those who *laboured for them*, the Apostle meant their ministers. Observe what he says, *ver. 13*, which should lead us to reverence our ministers: consider what the Apostle would have said to those of the present day, who entirely forsake their proper pastors, and run from place to place to hear those who have no authority to preach the Gospel.

Ver. 14 to the end. These rules and holy precepts Christians should never depart from. *Ver. 16.* Good Christians, in the midst of the greatest afflictions, may find cause to rejoice in the hope of happiness and glory when this painful life is ended. *Ver. 17, Pray without ceasing*, signifies, that we should never leave off the habit of prayer, but be ready on all occasions to offer up supplications and thanksgivings to God. *Ver. 19, Quench not the Spirit*, means do not by neglecting to improve the good thoughts and desires which the Holy Spirit puts into the mind, render them of no effect. *Ver. 20, 21.* These verses related to false teachers who had crept into the church at Thessalonica; and we are not to understand from them that every Christian is obliged to enter into an enquiry respecting every point of doctrine which is preached in the world, under the name of Christianity, for few are equal to the task; but it should warn the *unlearned* not to listen to those who preach doctrines contrary to that of the church, but to *hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering*. *Ver. 23.* Those who follow the rules here given may assure themselves that the *God of peace, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* will *sanctify them wholly*; but those who neglect them cannot expect to be *justified*, or regarded, at the last day as *just persons for Christ's sake*. *Ver. 24.* God is faithful to his promises, and those who follow the precepts of the Gospel will undoubtedly find acceptance with him.

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

CHAPTER I.

From this chapter we learn that the Christians of Thessalonica were persecuted on account of their religion, and that they

they maintained their Faith notwithstanding. Observe, *ver.* 3, 4, that the Apostle commends them not for *faith* alone but for *good works* also; and that they were to regard their persecutions as a manifest proof of the favour of God, who suffered them to be persecuted that they might gain the great reward in heaven which our Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount, promised to such as should be persecuted for righteousness' sake; *see Matt. chap. v. ver. 10, 11.* Observe here, *ver. 7,* what the promised reward of martyrs is, namely, a rest with the Apostles at the great day of judgment. Also, *ver. 8,* how dreadful that day will be to the wicked. Observe, *ver. 11,* that the expression *would count you worthy*, is again repeated, from which we are to understand not that human actions can have any real merit so as to deserve an eternal reward; but that of his own good pleasure God has promised to regard them as those who do them as worthy for Christ's sake.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter contains a very remarkable prophecy which foretold that before the second coming of Christ there would be great corruption in the church: but who is meant by the *Man of Sin*, the *Son of Perdition*, *ver. 3*, will not perhaps be understood till he is revealed, that is, till he actually comes, personally to oppose the Son of God, when he will meet with the destruction foretold, *ver. 8*, and all the wicked will perish with him. Observe, *ver. 10*, on what account they will perish, namely, because they *received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, that is, because they would not accept the offer of salvation on the terms of the Gospel. Observe, also, that on this account a *strong delusion* was to be sent to them, by which can only be meant that God would withdraw his Holy Spirit from them and leave them to be deceived, and to suffer the everlasting punishment prepared for those who had *pleasure in unrighteousness.* *Ver. 13.* The *beloved of the Lord*, those whom God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation though *sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth* are such persons as the faithful Thessalonians, to whom St. Paul addressed this Epistle; those who gladly receive the Gospel, and are ready to endure any persecution, and even to suffer martyrdom, rather than deny their Saviour, and give up his religion. For every one of these, by his wonderful
foreknowledge,

foreknowledge, God provided a glorious inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, and such will he constantly help with his divine grace that they may finally attain it. But let us not suppose from any expressions in this chapter, that God, before the foundation of the world, ordained some to be *righteous* while they were in this world, and to be glorified in heaven; and others to be *wicked* upon earth, and everlastingly miserable in hell; for we may know by the Apostle's injunction, *ver. 15, Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught,* (that is, the doctrines of the Gospel) that unless they did so and were desirous to be *established in every good word and work*, instead of *loving unrighteousness*, the grace of God would be withdrawn from them, and their hearts would not be comforted with the good hope of salvation. In the beginning of the chapter the Apostle warns the Thessalonians not to suppose from what he had said in the foregoing chapter that the *day of judgment* was near at hand; and this has proved true, for nearly 1800 years have passed since he gave them that caution. How much longer this awful day may be deferred no one but God himself can tell; and as the exact time is not foretold it is in vain to attempt to discover it; but many signs are pointed out by our Saviour by which its near approach may be apprehended; and when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, in the manner we now behold them, we should, as St. Paul here advises, *stand fast, and hold the traditions of the Apostles*. For of this we are sure, that in one sense, the *day of judgment* is not *very far* from every one of us, because our eternal state will be determined at the day of our death. There is no repentance in the grave, neither is there any falling off from righteousness. See our Saviour's prophecy relating to the end of the world, *Matt. chap. xxiv. and Luke, xxi.*

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 6. We must observe here that St. Paul desires the prayers of the church, which shows that prayers should be offered up by every congregation for its ministers. In all ages of the world there have been unreasonable and wicked men who, having no faith, endeavour to destroy the faith of others;

others; but whatever such men may say we may depend upon it that God will be faithful to his promises and establish those in the truth, and defend from all evil those who trusting in his promises seek for the help of his Holy Spirit.

Ver. 6 to the end. By *walking disorderly*, *ver. 6*, may be understood both acting contrary to the rules of the church, and leading ungodly lives, both of which are contrary to the *tradition* or doctrine of the Apostles. Observe, *ver. 9*, that it was not because the Thessalonians had a *right* to expect the Apostle to be their minister, without his requiring any recompence for his labours; but because, knowing their necessities, he would not be chargeable to them. Observe, *ver. 10*, &c. how the Apostle blames those people who, instead of employing themselves, and labouring in some honest calling, spend their lives in idleness, curiosity, and frivolous amusements. This kind of life is very common in cities and towns, but though the world looks upon these things as innocent, they are utterly unworthy of Christians. Observe what the Apostle says, *ver. 13*, and do not let the bad example of others lead you into sin.

FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 8. Though this Epistle was addressed to Timothy as a minister of Christ, we may, from the instructions which the Apostle gave to *him*, respecting what doctrines he *was* to teach, form a judgment of the doctrines we ought to *avoid*, and those which we ought to *hold*.

Ver. 2. The Apostle calls Timothy *his own son*, because he had converted him to the Christian faith. Observe, *ver. 3*, that no doctrine was to be preached but that which the Apostles taught. *Ver. 4.* *Fables and endless genealogies* were points of the Jewish law, which made no part of the Christian religion, and only gave occasion for disputes. *Godly edifying*, means improvement in godliness. *Ver. 5.* Observe, that *the end of the commandment* is not *faith* alone, but *charity*, which last word includes all kinds of good works. Though these will not save without faith, those who do them not will find
faith

faith of no avail to them. *Ver. 6, 7.* Observe what the Apostle says of those who turned away from this doctrine.

Ver. 8 to 12. These verses show that though the *ceremonial law* of Moses was abolished, or set aside, the *moral law* remained in force as a restraint upon Christians to keep them from the vices practised by the heathens.

Ver. 12 to the end. Observe what the Apostle says of himself in the first of these verses, which shows, that for what he did before his conversion in respect to persecuting the Christians, he received mercy and was pardoned because *he did it ignorantly, he verily thought*, as he said when preaching before Felix, *that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*; he was not therefore at his conversion changed from a *wicked-hearted man* to a *godly one*, but from a zealous supporter of the law of Moses, to a true believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He calls himself a *blasphemer* indeed because he had spoken against the Son of God; and, *ver. 15*, in his humility he calls himself the *chief of sinners*, but he was not so in intention, therefore persons who live in a course of sin and wickedness have no reason to hope, from the grace bestowed upon St. Paul, that God will, by an *extraordinary call*, change them from sinners to saints. Observe, *ver 15*, for what purpose Jesus Christ came into the world. *Ver. 18.* *To war a good warfare*, signified to do his duty as a faithful minister in spite of all the difficulties he would have to encounter. *Ver. 19, 20.* Observe that the Apostle reckoned it *blasphemy* to preach against or to maintain any doctrine which had a tendency to overturn the faith. *To deliver unto Satan* relates to a power which the Apostles had, in consequence of which the devil was permitted to afflict the person so delivered up, as he had formerly tormented Job, with bodily diseases. See 1 Corinthians, chap. v. *ver. 5.*

CHAPTER II.

The directions here given to Timothy as a minister, point out some important duties to Christians in general.

Ver. 1 to 4. Observe what is said concerning *praying for kings and governors*.

Ver. 4 to 9. Observe, *ver. 4*, that God does not *will* any one to perdition; all who will come to the knowledge of the truth, that is, embrace the Gospel when it is offered to them,
and

and continue faithful to the end, will be saved. How God will deal with the heathens to whom it has not been preached, must be left to *the judge of all the earth*, who will judge every one not according to what he hath *not*, but according to what he *hath*.

Ver. 9 to 11. Observe the directions which the Apostle gives concerning the manner in which women should dress themselves; and compare it with the manners of the present day; when women in every station, far from *adorning themselves in modest apparel*, expose their persons as if there was no such virtue as modesty, and purchase expensive ornaments beyond their station and condition in life; women of high rank and fortune may wear gold and costly apparel without sin, as we may learn from *Psalms* xlv, but it must be worn without pride or vanity; the greatest ornament of a woman, however, is a regard to religious duties. *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain*, says Solomon, *but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* See *Prov. chap. xxxi. ver. 30.*

Ver. 11 to the end, Observe here that women are not to set themselves up above their husbands, because, before the transgression of Eve, man was the head of the creation; and after it the whole female sex was put in subjection to the other sex, by God himself; at which time also the curse of child-bearing was pronounced, See *Gen. chap. iii. ver. 16.* But observe here, *ver. 15*, the promise to true christian women, that they shall be preserved. Indeed it is very surprising to think, considering the great *pain and peril of childbearing*, how seldom life is lost in it; surely women who are so supported, ought to be very thankful to the Almighty for their safe deliverance!

CHAPTER III.

This chapter relates almost entirely to the christian ministry, but we may learn from it, that there was such a ministry from the beginning, of which ours is a continuation, only that at first while there were Apostles, they were the chief ministers, and Bishops were under them; next to whom were Presbyters, and below them, Deacons; after the Apostles were dead, Bishops were the chief ministers for ordering the affairs of the Church, and so they continue to this day, having two orders

orders of ministers under them, who are called Priests and Deacons.

Ver. 15. Observe what the place in which true worship is performed by a regular ministry, is called. Observe also *ver. 16*, which shows what the *mystery of godliness* is, namely the doctrine of the *divinity of the Son of God*, his being *manifested* or made known as such in the person of Jesus Christ, and proved to be so by the Spirit of God, which was in him, and by the testimony that was borne to him by angels; the conversion of many through the preaching of the Apostles; and by his glorious ascension into heaven. This was the mystery which the first ministers preached, and this doctrine continues to be taught in our church by a regular ministry, as it was first delivered to the Apostles, and by them to the ministers they ordained.

CHAPTER IV.

What the Apostle foretold in the first verses of this chapter, have been fulfilled and is still fulfilling in the world, there have been, and still are, many *seducing spirits*; observe *ver. 3, 4* what things are particularly called *doctrines of devils*, as they doubtless were at first. Observe particularly *ver. 8*, and consider what promises are made in the Gospel both in regard to *this life* and the *next*; not of worldly riches and honours indeed, nor of exemption from trouble and affliction, but of the *love of God*, the *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, the *help of the Holy Spirit*, and an *eternal inheritance in the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer*. What can the world give, worthy to be compared with these? *Ver. 12.* Though this advice is addressed to a young minister, it may be applied to young Christians in general, who by following it become truly amiable. *Ver. 14.* The gift that was in him, signified the *gift of the Holy Ghost*, which was given at the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*, by whom are meant the Apostles and the higher orders of ministers. No man had authority as a minister without being ordained to it by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The presbytery now are the Bishops and the Priests. After reading these directions for ministers, consider what ought to be done on the part of those to whom they are appointed to minister, namely, to
join

join with them in public worship, to attend to their advice both in public and private, and to pay them respect and reverence on account of their holy office. Unless those who *hear* will do their part, it will be impossible for those who *teach* to save them.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter consists of rules for the government of the Church. *Ver. 1.* By *elders* are understood not only the head *ministers of the Church*, but *aged men*. *Ver. 3.* *Widows* indeed, are those who are desolate and unprovided for, and who live as women under such circumstances ought to do; how that is, *ver. 5* instructs us. To *live in pleasure*, signifies following pleasure to the neglect of piety. Observe *ver. 4*, how children and young persons should be taught to behave to their parents. *Piety at home*, signifies obeying the 5th commandment. *Ver. 8* shows, that those who neglect to provide for their own families when they are able, are guilty of a great sin. *Infidels* are unbelievers. *Ver. 9.* This relates to those widows who in the Apostles' time were maintained by the Church. *Ver. 12.* Waxed wanton against Christ, means, grew weary of the religion of Christ. *Ver. 17.* *Double honour* signifies better maintenance. *Ver. 18* alludes to the provision which ought to be made for those who labour in the ministry. *Ver. 21.* The *elect angels* are understood to mean Angels who under Christ watch over the different Churches: or it may mean faithful Christians who will make their calling and election sure. Observe *ver. 22*, that Timothy who was not an Apostle but a Bishop, had authority to ordain ministers by the laying on of hands.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 3. By the *yoke* was meant *bondage to heathen masters*; many of the Roman slaves were converted to christianity. Christians servants should learn to serve their masters with a constant regard to their own duty, whatever the character of their master might be; but in this country, no servant is a slave, every one is at liberty to leave a wicked master, and this should be done by those who have a regard to their own salvation, for wicked masters often corrupt good servants.

But

But it is too often the case that servants think only of the profits of the place they engage in, without reflecting that it will profit a man nothing *to gain even the whole world and lose his own soul*. Observe *ver. 3*, what words or doctrine christian ministers are to preach, and *ver. 4*, what sort of preaching is to be avoided; we should learn from them not to go after preachers who set forth doctrine different from that of Christ and his Apostles.

Ver. 6 to 17. Every Christian should pay great attention to this passage of Scripture. Consider, *ver. 6*, how happy it is to have the heart set on God and heaven, and to be contented in that state of life in which God has placed us; recollect what the Apostle says, *chap. iv. ver. 8*. Those who *will be rich, ver. 8*, signify those whose minds are fully bent upon gaining riches, without regard to godliness and contentment. The consequences of this inordinate love of money are described *ver. 9, 10*. Observe *ver. 11*, what the *godly man* should follow after, or strive to attain to. *Ver. 12. Fight the good fight*, signifies strive manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil, which is the only way to lay hold of that eternal life to which we are called by the Gospel. Every Christian has many witnesses of his profession, namely, *God*, the *angels* and *saints* in heaven, and his *fellow Christians* on earth. Observe, that this *warfare* is to be sustained to the end of our lives, that we may be ready to meet our Lord with joy at the last day. Observe, *ver. 15, 16*, what the Apostle says of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ver. 17 to 20. These verses relate to the duty of the rich; and show that by making a good use of their wealth, they may lay up treasure for themselves in heaven.

Ver. 20 to 21. These verses, though particularly addressed to Timothy, concern all christian ministers, who ought to keep steadily to the doctrines of the Church.

SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

THIS Epistle was written at the time St. Paul was a second time prisoner in Rome, and a little while before he suffered martyrdom.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we are to observe the great affection that subsisted between St. Paul and Timothy, and the comfort which the Apostle derived from this young minister's steadfast faith, and exemplary conduct. *Ver. 5.* Eunice the mother of Timothy was a *Jewess*, but converted early to the christian faith; his father was a *Greek*, see *Acts chap. xvi. ver. 1.* Lois his grandmother was a christian likewise; observe that by previous instruction of these two pious women, Timothy was well prepared to profit by the preaching of the Apostles. Women have it in their power to do a great deal towards the religious instruction of their children; few are so ignorant but that they can at least teach them their prayers and their catechism; and it is the duty of parents to do the best they possibly can in this respect. *Ver. 6.* Observe that the *gift of the Holy Ghost* came with the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, not that they could of themselves bestow it; but according to the promise of Christ, it was given to those whom they ordained. *Ver. 9.* We owe our salvation entirely to the free grace of God, for no works of ours could have obtained it; and God was under no obligation to call us to a state of salvation; he might have left us all to perish in our sins; but he graciously resolved to offer salvation upon easy terms, and to save those who would comply with them. This grace began to operate in the world from the fall of Adam, but it was not fully revealed till the time of the Gospel. *Ver. 13.* The *form of sound words* meant the doctrine of salvation from eternal death by a Saviour who brought life and immortality to light. This is what our ministers still teach, and this no Christian should give up.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1, 2. Observe, *ver. 2*, in what manner the knowledge of the truth was to be kept up.

Ver. 3 to 20. In these verses St. Paul, by two plain similitudes of a *soldier* and a *workman*, charges Timothy as a good *bishop* of the Church of Christ, and an *evangelist*, not to concern himself with secular affairs. Observe *ver. 11, 12, 13*, which relate to all who have been buried with

Christ in baptism, that is, all christians. *Ver. 14.* These are the things which the true christian minister was to remind his hearers of. *Ver. 16.* *Profane and vain babblings*, signify any doctrines contrary to those of the Gospel, such was, *ver. 17, 18*, that of Hymeneus and Philetus, who denied the doctrine of a general resurrection, which is the very foundation of the christian faith; and it must ever remain so, as St. Paul says, *1 Cor. chap. xv.* for if there be no resurrection of the dead, Christ has died in vain for the sins of mankind.

Ver. 20, 21. By *vessels of honour*, in these verses, were meant preachers of the Gospel, who kept to its *pure doctrines*; and by *vessels of dishonour*, those who preached doctrine *mixed with errors*. Observe, that their being either the one or the other, depended upon themselves.

Ver. 22, 23. These verses contain excellent precepts for both ministers and ordinary Christians.

Ver. 24 to the end. These verses convey instruction to ministers, how to deal with those who preach false doctrines. Those who take up any opinion contrary to the pure doctrine of the Gospel may be said to have *fallen into the snare of the devil*; for all heresy, &c. proceeds first of all from the great enemy of religion.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 10. The prophecies in these verses seem to be fulfilling at this present time in so remarkable a manner, as to give us cause to think, that the time of their full accomplishment, *ver. 9*, draws near. God only knows! This however may be known by *all*, that the vices named in these verses, ought not to be practised by any who bear the name of Christ; and that we should every one of us be upon our guard against such persons as are here described. Observe, *ver. 8*, that the Apostle gives the names of the magicians who opposed Moses during the plagues of Egypt.

Ver. 10 to 13. In the first of these verses the Apostle recommends his own example to the imitation of Timothy. *Ver. 12* signifies that all the first Christians should suffer persecution; but since the quiet establishment of the Church, numbers of faithful Christians have lived and died in peace.

Ver.

Ver. 13. Observe that the Apostle mentions it as a happy advantage that Timothy *had known the Scripture from his youth*; and recollect that he learnt them from his grandmother and his mother. The *New Testament* was not written at that time. There was then no Scripture but the books of the Old Testament. Remember that the Scripture is the only book that can make us wise unto salvation.

Ver. 16, 17. Observe that every part of Scripture was given *by the inspiration of God*, and take notice for what purposes God caused the bible to be written; for *doctrine*, that is, what we must believe; for *reproof*, that we may correct our errors; for *correction*, or the reformation of vice; and for *instruction in the way of righteousness*. The *man of God* means the good Christian, but particularly the faithful minister.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 6. These verses contain an earnest exhortation to Timothy, and they also point out that a time would come when the sound doctrine of regular ministers would not be approved; but that the people having a desire to hear new doctrines, would *keep to themselves teachers*, instead of keeping to their proper teachers. This we see fulfilled in our own days.

Ver. 6 to 9. Observe in these verses that the Apostle was in constant expectation that he should be called upon to suffer martyrdom, and that he calls this being *offered up*, because he had resolved to submit to it, rather than deny Christ. Take notice, *ver. 7*, that St. Paul calls the christian warfare he had been engaged in, namely, his striving for many years against persecutions and tribulations of various kinds, *fighting the good fight*. Observe, *ver. 8*, with what glorious hopes and happy assurances his mind was filled; and that the *crown of glory*, the *eternal reward*, is not limited to the Apostles and martyrs, but will be bestowed on all faithful Christians, in proportion no doubt to their sufferings for the sake of the Gospel.

Ver. 9 to the end. These verses relate chiefly to the Apostle's own affairs; and describe the treatment he met with at Rome and the constant support he had under all his trials from God. Observe that he was very desirous once more to see his beloved Timothy.

EPISTLE TO TITUS.

CHAPTER I.

THIS Epistle relates chiefly to the duty of ministers of the Gospel. We find in it a description of false teachers and wicked Christians.

Ver. 1 to 5. The *faith of God's elect*, signifies that faith which God requires of those who are made members of the church of Christ by Baptism. *Ver. 2.* Before the world was, God prepared the kingdom of heaven for the righteous, and knowing that mankind would forfeit that title to it, which he should bestow upon them at their creation, he graciously resolved to restore it to them, through his beloved Son, and to make manifest his gracious purpose in due time by the preaching of the Gospel.

Ver. 5. The doctrine of salvation was revealed to St. Paul, and the other Apostles, by Christ, that they might preach it to the world exactly as they received it; and they were to ordain and instruct other ministers in the same. *Ver. 4.* The *common faith* signified that faith in which all the members of the church should agree. Titus was a minister, ordained by St. Paul, and he was to ordain others for different churches, as we learn from this chapter.

Ver. 6 to 10. These verses describe the qualifications which Titus was to look for in those he ordained.

Ver. 10 to 15. In these verses we have the character of certain false teachers among the Cretians, and of some of the people.

Ver. 15 to the end. By the *pure* are here meant Gentiles, purified from heathenism by being baptized into the Christian faith; to these any kinds of meats were *pure*, that is, *clean*, because the distinction of meats which the Jews, by the law of Moses were obliged to observe, was put an end to. The *Jewish fables*, *ver. 14*, probably related to the observance of the Mosaic law in this particular.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe, in these verses, that *works of morality* are recommended as *becoming sound doctrine*; and take notice
of

of the things which Titus was to recommend, according to the condition and circumstances of his hearers. Observe, *ver. 10*, the *end* they were always to keep in view, namely, *to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*; or, in other words, *to glorify Christ*, by showing the purity and excellence of his religion.

Ver. 11 to the end. Observe, that the ministers were to recommend these *moral works* in the strongest manner to Christians, not only as becoming their holy profession, but from a principle of obedience to the commandments of God. Observe, *ver. 12*, how Christians are required to live, and *ver. 13*, what *reward* they are encouraged to look for—the *blest hope* is that of having everlasting life and happiness at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, *ver. 14*, for what purpose our Lord came into the world; but do not expect that you will be among those who will be *redeemed from all iniquity*; that is, who will be *justified for Christ's sake*, if you are not *zealous for good works*, for by these are the *peculiar people of Christ* distinguished.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 9. These verses contain further direction to Titus in respect to what he was to teach. Observe, *ver. 1, 2*, that *obedience to rulers and magistrates*, is a Christian duty. *Ver. 3* alludes to the manners of the Gentiles before they were converted. Observe, *ver. 5*, that the Apostle is careful to guard against the notion some might take up from his speaking so highly of *good works*, that those who had practised them in their heathen state were entitled to an eternal reward, and had been taken into covenant with God on account of their *own merits*; on the contrary, they were indebted entirely to the mercy and goodness of God for their salvation. *Ver. 5.* The *washing of regeneration*, means the Sacrament of Baptism, in which they were regenerated or born again, and renewed unto righteousness by the Holy Ghost; in consequence of which they were *justified*, or reckoned as just persons, and made heirs to an eternal inheritance. But observe, *ver. 8*, that the Apostle exhorted Titus constantly to *maintain good works*; and that he says the *moral works*, which he had before directed him to recommend, are

good and profitable. Those persons, therefore, who teach the contrary, must certainly be in a great error.

Ver. 9 to 10. The *foolish questions*, *ver. 9*, related to what the Apostle had before called *Jewish Fables*. *Ver. 10.* A heretick is one who tries to overturn the doctrine of the church, as taught by Christ and his Apostles. These were to be put out of the church, that is, not to be reckoned amongst the members of it; and such a law still exists, but it is not for ordinary Christians to take upon themselves to punish hereticks; for, under the pretence of doing this, many good Christians have been cruelly persecuted and put to death. But the company of such persons should be shunned as much as possible.

EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

PHILEMON was of the city of Colosse; and after this Apostle had converted him, is supposed to have been a minister of the Gospel in that city. Onesimus was his slave, who had run away from him, and who going to Rome met with St. Paul, and was converted by him to the Christian religion, after which the Apostle sent him back to Philemon with this letter. The whole proceeding of St. Paul, in this matter, showed his charity, meekness, and justice: and we learn from this Epistle that no Christian, though of the meanest rank, is to be despised—that Christianity does not lessen the power of masters—that servants ought to make satisfaction for any injury or wrong done by them to their masters; and that there is an affection due from a master to a good and profitable servant.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE Hebrews were the Jews, who had been converted to Christianity; the design of this Epistle was to confirm them in the profession of the Gospel, and in holiness of life; and to prevent their being drawn aside by the fondness they might still have for the Jewish worship; or disheartened by the persecutions to which, as Christians, they were exposed.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. There were prophets in the earliest ages of the world, Enoch and Noah before the flood; Abraham, Moses, and many others who, in succession, foretold things to come, and preached righteousness to the generations of mankind, as they rose up one after another: the last of the Prophets, before John the Baptist, was Malachi. The writings of some of the prophets, make a part of the Old Testament.

Ver. 2. *These last days* mean the *times of the Gospel*, which will continue till our Saviour comes again. Observe, in this and the following verses, what the Apostle, by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, says of Christ, and let it help to establish your faith in him as the EVERLASTING SON of the FATHER.

Ver. 4. Observe, in this and the following verses, that the Son of God is infinitely higher in dignity and nature than the highest of the angelic host. This doctrine the Apostle traces in the prophetic Psalms of David, in which may be found the words he quotes in several verses of this chapter.

Ver. 14. Observe what is said concerning the angels. By *heirs of salvation*, we are to understand those who are diligent to make their calling and election sure, by maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and obeying the moral law. Recollect what you have read in the Old Testament concerning the ministry of angels in the history of Abraham, Jacob, Lot, and other holy men; also what you have read in the New Testament of the angel Gabriel being sent to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, the shepherds, the Apostles, and others, after our Lord's resurrection, and at his ascension, and to Cornelius the centurion. These angels were all *ministering spirits to heirs of salvation*. Recollect what our Saviour said when he spake his parables of the *lost sheep and the piece of money*, *Luke, chap. xv. ver. 7 and 9*; all of which prove that the angels are employed in executing the will of God in this world; and we have reason to think we are constantly in the presence of angels, though, as they are of a spiritual nature, we cannot see them. We learn from our Saviour's discourse, *Luke, chap. xx. ver. 36*, that good people when they leave this world will be *like the angels, and live*

amongst them; we may therefore regard angels as heavenly friends, and as such desire to know them hereafter; but we must keep in mind that the highest angel is far below the Son of God in nature and dignity, and that through Christ alone, our worship and adoration are to be paid to the Father.

CHAPTER II.

Observe *ver. 1*, which relates to the doctrines in the foregoing chapter. *Ver. 2*. The *word spoken by angels*, means the Jewish ceremonial law, not the ten commandments, for they were spoken by God himself. The word *angel* signifies a *messenger*. Moses was the *angel* or messenger of the *old law*. *Ver. 3*. The *great salvation* means that revealed by Christ in the Gospel. Recollect the proofs which our Saviour, when on earth, gave of the truth of his Gospel in the wonderful miracles which he wrought; and the witness which God bore to him as his beloved Son, at his baptism and transfiguration. *Ver. 6, 7*, are quotations from Psalm viii. In the latter part of the chapter the Apostle shows that Christ, in his *human nature*, endured great humiliation and suffering, but that it led to his exaltation into heaven; and that those who are called upon to suffer like him, will with him be exalted to glory, though infinitely below him, most certainly, in dignity and excellence. *Ver. 16*. Observe, that when the Son of God came down from heaven he did not take upon him *the nature of angels* but of *men*. It was mankind he came to save; and we find that it was the will of God that the sacrifice for sin should be made in the *same nature* in which the offence was committed. *Ver. 17*. The Jewish priests offered up *animals* in their sacrifices, but *ver. 17*, Christ, as a *priest*, offered up his *own body and blood*; in doing which, for the reconciliation of the sins of the people, he was a faithful high priest, that is, he made the proper atonement. Observe, *ver. 18*, what Christ has power to do, and in all temptations and difficulties seek for his aid and protection.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 7. In these verses the Apostle points out the excellency of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ above the

person and ministry of Moses—the former as a *son over his own house*, the latter as a *steward* only. Observe, *ver. 6*, what the Apostle meant by *Christ's house*, namely, his church.

Ver. 7 to the end. In these verses the Hebrews are warned not to follow, in respect to the Christian covenant, the bad example of their forefathers, the Israelites, in respect to God's covenant with them as his chosen people. Recollect the history of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai, and the many temptations, or provocations, they gave the Lord in the course of forty years, till at length on their despising the land of Canaan, from the report of the men who went to view it, they said one to another, *Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt*. On which the Lord *swore in his wrath* that they should not enter into the place of rest which he had provided for them, the *land of Canaan*, but should all die in the wilderness; *see Numbers, chap. xiv.*

From this chapter we may understand that God at the last day will deal with unfaithful Christians as he did with the rebellious Israelites, exclude them from the place of rest and happiness in the *heavenly Canaan*. Every person then who has been taken into the Christian covenant, that is, every one who has been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, should attend to the Apostle's admonition, *ver. 12, 13*, and observe, *ver. 14*, that they will not be finally made partakers of the blessings of the heavenly kingdom unless they maintain, to the end of their lives, their faith in the divine promises. Observe, that in this chapter the Apostle quotes part of the 95th Psalm, which Psalm very properly makes a part of our church service.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 14. The Apostle here reminds the Hebrews, as Israelites, that there is a further rest than that of Canaan promised to the faithful, and warns them to take care not to forfeit it. Observe *ver. 3, 6, 7, 11*, that *unbelief* is repeatedly mentioned as the sin for which the Israelites were shut out from Canaan, and as that which will exclude Christians from heaven; which should lead every one to do what the Apostle advises in the 11th verse. *Ver. 12, 13.* The Word of God here meant is the Gospel, mentioned *ver. 1, 2.*

The

The meaning of these two verses seems to be that the threatenings of the Gospel against unbelievers are certain, and that offenders cannot escape the all-seeing eye of God.

Ver. 14 to the end In these verses the Apostle speaks of our Saviour in his priestly character. Observe that our great high priest is called, *ver. 14*, the Son of God; and in the next verse he is spoken of as one who had felt, *in his own person*, the infirmities of human nature, and been tempted after the same manner as ourselves, which proves that our Saviour had both a divine and human nature. This is a principal part of the *profession of our faith*, which we are to hold fast, never giving up the belief of it; for if we do we cannot expect to *enter into his rest*; but, on the other hand, if we believe all that is revealed concerning our Saviour, and follow, to the best of our power, the blessed example he gave as *man*, we may pray with hope and confidence for the pardon of our sins, not doubting, but that every proper allowance will be made for our real infirmities, and for the temptations to which we have been exposed. Observe, *ver. 15*, though our Saviour was *tempted*, he never once sinned. Recollect his temptations in the wilderness.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter treats of the honour and dignity of our Saviour's priesthood: what we are to understand by it is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the high priest of an everlasting priesthood, distinguished from the order of that of Aaron, by the name of the *order of Melchizedek*. In the xivth chapter of Genesis we read that *Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God*; and that he *blessed Abraham, and received tithes of him*. David also, Psalm cx. speaks of the Messiah as *a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*. These passages of Scripture cannot be easily explained without going further into the Jewish priesthood than is needful for the unlearned Christian to do.

Ver. 7 alludes to our Lord's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and shows that, as man, he suffered great affliction and distress of mind before he made the offering for sin; but these sufferings gave him the occasion of proving his submission

sion to the will of God. Our Lord's prayer for deliverance from them, concluded with his saying to the Father, *Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.* Those who are the adopted children of God, that is, those who have been baptized into the Christian faith, should learn from hence that when they are exposed to sufferings, they are in this respect like the only begotten Son of God, their blessed Redeemer; and that like him they should learn patience and obedience from their sufferings, and like him call upon their heavenly Father in the hour of distress.

Ver. 12. The Apostle reproves the Hebrews for not knowing these things; because, as Jews, they ought to have had a more perfect understanding of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, of which the priesthood of Aaron was a type or figure. By *milk* he meant the easiest and plainest doctrines of the Gospel; by *meat* the mysterious ones.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1 to 4. These verses show what are the first principles of the Christian religion, namely, the doctrines of Repentance from works deserving death, Faith in Jesus Christ, the Resurrection of the dead, and a future Judgment. These being once known, the Apostle says, Christians should endeavour to advance till they are fully acquainted with every point of Christian knowledge.

Ver. 4 to 9. These verses signify that those who fall back from Christianity into infidelity harden their hearts against it, so as to despise the means of grace, without which no renewing of their souls unto righteousness can take place. These are said to *crucify the Son of God afresh*, and to put him to open shame, because they make his sufferings of no use to themselves, and bring a scandal upon his religion. Observe the comparison in these verses, which is designed to show that those who, having received the grace of God, bring forth the good fruits of righteousness are *blessed*, and those who continue in wickedness are *rejected*; the last alone are they who are *nigh to cursing*, and whose end is to be burned.

Ver. 9, 10. These verses are very comfortable to those who believe the Gospel, and show forth their faith by their patience and charity.

Ver.

Ver. 11, 12. Observe what is required of every one who desires to continue in the hope of a heavenly reward. By *them who inherit the promises, ver. 12*, the Apostle meant the patriarchs.

Ver. 13. These verses allude to the promise which the Lord made to Abraham after he had offered his son Isaac; *see Genesis, chap. xxii ver. 16, 17*, and what we are to learn from the application of it is, to consider that God's promises are unchangeable, and that as surely as those to Abraham concerning the multiplying and blessing of his seed were fulfilled, so surely will those be fulfilled which are made through Christ concerning the admission of the righteous into the kingdom of heaven. This hope is properly called the *anchor of the soul*, because it will keep it steadfast against the temptations and troubles of life which may be compared to the raging billows of the ocean.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter relates entirely to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and is designed to prove that the order of Melchizedek was far superior to that of Aaron.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter also relates to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Observe, *ver. 1*, what is said of our Lord's exaltation, and *ver. 2*, what he is the minister of, which prove that Christ, in his *priestly office*, is more excellent than the priests of the Levitical order, inasmuch as the covenant of which he is the mediator is better than that of *the law*. *Ver. 8.* The Apostle here quotes a passage from the prophecy of Jeremiah, which shows that God foretold long before that the covenant he made with the Israelites should give place to a more excellent one, in which God would pardon the sins of mankind and sanctify their souls. This is the covenant into which we have been admitted at our baptism, and if we keep to the conditions of it God will certainly do for us all that is promised in these verses. Not that we are to expect miracles to be wrought for our conversion if we lead wicked lives; and that without taking any pains to learn God's laws he will make us know them by an *inward teaching*: but if we *read, mark, learn,*

learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures, God will, by his grace, enable us to understand and profit by them ; so that, be a man's condition ever so mean and low, he shall be able to know the Lord as his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, as well as those who are above him in rank, and in other knowledge. But the direct contrary of this will be the case if we depart from our baptismal vow and lead wicked abandoned lives. Christians have great reason to rejoice in being admitted into this *new covenant*.

CHAPTER IX.

In this chapter the Apostle shows how far more excellent that sacrifice was which Christ made of himself on the cross, than the Jewish sacrifices. He also shows that those sacrifices and ceremonies were types of Christ and his Gospel ; and he concludes that the sacrifice of Christ was *perfect* and not to be repeated like that made by the high priest of the order of Aaron, every year ; that Christ has entered into the heavens to remain there a continual intercessor for us, making our peace with God when we confess our sins and resolve to amend our lives ; more especially when we make use of the means of reconciliation which he himself has furnished in the Holy Sacrament which he ordained in remembrance of his making a sacrifice of his body and blood for our redemption.

We may learn from this chapter, that the *tabernacle*, and all its *furniture* ; the *ark*, with the *mercy seat* ; the *vail* which parted the *holy place* from the *most holy* ; the *altars*, the *killing* of the *vicims* for the *sacrifices* ; every thing under the *old law* were types and figures of the *new covenant* ; but it would lead those who have but little ability or leisure for study too far were we to attempt to give a more particular explanation of them. It will be sufficient to remember what the Apostle says in the two last verses of the chapter.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter shows that nothing but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the oblation he has once made of his body, according to the will of God, could make satisfaction for the sins of the world. Observe, *ver. 5*, that *a body was prepared*,

prepared, or ordained, for the Son of God to take to himself, that he might do what, in his *divine nature*, he could not do, — lay down his life for the redemption of mankind.

This chapter should confirm us in the belief that the work of our redemption is fully accomplished, which should fill us with love for our blessed Redeemer who wrought it, and make us resolve in all things to submit to the will of God. And we should call to mind that there is a holy ordinance expressly appointed by Christ himself for the commemoration of it. How Christians, who read the Scriptures, can stay away, as the generality do, from the Lord's Table, is really a most surprizing thing! Those who live in the total neglect of it, whatever be their faith, and whatever be their works, are at the best but imperfect Christians; and they certainly deprive themselves of the greatest advantage they can possibly obtain in this world, excepting that of *Baptism*; for, as the *Sacrament of Baptism* gives admittance into the Christian Covenant, the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* furnishes the means of renewing that covenant to those who truly repent of their sins. Consider seriously whether any Christian ought to neglect what Christ commanded *ALL to do in remembrance of him*. Whether it is not a great slight of our best and kindest friend to omit fulfilling what may be called his dying request. Whether any one can say "I have never broke my baptismal vow." "I am free from sin." "I have no need of renewing unto righteousness." "I want no fresh supplies of grace to enable me to do my duty better for the time to come." Unless we can say all this with truth we stand in need of the *Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; and nothing will contribute so much to the keeping up our confidence in the divine promises, or be so likely to prevent our drawing back from the faith, to the perdition of our souls, as a frequent participation of this holy ordinance. Whenever, therefore, we read any thing relating to the *sacrifice made by Christ*, such reflections as these should fill our minds, and make us resolve to lose no favourable opportunity of commemorating it.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1. Observe here, that by *Faith* we are to understand such a strong and lively persuasion of the truth of God's promises

promises as shall make us regard the things promised to be as much ours, provided we maintain our faith, and show it by obedience, as if they were actually present, though we do not see them.

Ver. 2, 3. It is through Faith that we believe what is revealed to us in the *first chapter of Genesis*; and it was Faith that supported the *elders*, by whom are meant the ancient patriarchs, and other righteous persons, whom we read of in the Bible, under all their trials and temptations. *Ver. 3.* It is through *Faith*, built upon the word of God, in the *first chapter of Genesis*, that we believe what is mentioned in this verse.

Ver. 4. Abel offered of the *firstlings of his flock*, which was the offering by which, before the coming of Christ, faith in God's promise of redemption, through the *seed of the woman*, was to be testified; therefore he *was reckoned righteous*. Cain refused to offer the same sacrifice, therefore *his sin remained*; it was not pardoned, for he showed that he had not faith.

Ver. 5, 6. Enoch lived at a time when mankind were very wicked; he was a *preacher of righteousness*, and a *prophet*. See what he prophesied in the General Epistle of St. Jude, *ver. 14, 15*. It is said in *Genesis, chap. v. ver. 22*, that *Enoch walked with God, and God took him*; that is, he lived a life of *Faith*, agreeably to the commandments of God, and was *translated, or taken, to his heavenly inheritance without dying*, after the same manner, probably, as the prophet Elijah afterwards was. Observe, *ver. 6*, that *without faith no one can please God*, and what every one who desires to be accepted of God must believe, because God has promised to *reward those who diligently serve him*.

Ver. 7. Consider what a strong faith it must require to encourage Noah to do what he did in obedience to God's command. Nothing but the firm belief of a heavenly inheritance for the faithful could have led him to do all that he did.

Ver. 8 to 23. It was the same hope we find that supported the faith of Abraham, through the various trials to which he was exposed. Observe, *ver. 10, 13, 14, 16*, that he looked for a heavenly inheritance, as did Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Observe also, *ver. 13*, in what light they regarded themselves; merely, as *pilgrims, or travellers, towards a heavenly country*.

Ver.

Ver. 23 to 29. The parents of Moses also, we find, were led by *faith* to hide him from the cruelty of Pharaoh. And Moses himself having been brought up in the faith of his parents did as is described in these verses. *Ver. 26.* The *reproach of Christ* signifies the reproach of believing in the same Lord God who, in the Apostle's time, was called the Lord Christ Jesus. Several verses in this chapter intimate that the religion of the patriarchs was of the same nature with the Christian religion, and that their faith was also built upon the promise of an *heavenly inheritance*. The law of Moses was added to keep the Israelites separate from the heathen nations.

Ver. 29. It certainly required faith in the Israelites to go into the midst of the Red Sea when it was divided; *see Exodus, chap. xiv.*

Ver. 30. The Israelites also showed their faith when they marched round the walls of Jericho as the Lord had commanded them; *see Joshua, chap. vi.*

Ver. 31. Rahab showed that she believed in the Lord God of Israel when she hid the spies; *see Joshua, chap. vi.*

Ver. 32. For the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephtha, *see Judges, chap. vi.—chap. iv.—chap. xiii.—chap. ii.* David and Samuel gave many proofs of their faith, as did all the prophets.

Ver. 33. *Stopped the mouth of lions*, alluded to the history of Daniel, who believed that God would deliver him out of the lions' den; *see Daniel, chap. vi.*

Ver. 34. *Quenched the violence of fire*, alluded to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who believed that God would deliver them out of the fiery furnace; *see Dan. chap. iii.* *Escaped the edge of the sword, and out of weakness were made strong, &c.* meant, probably, the judges and kings of Israel, who gained such memorable victories as we read of in the Bible.

Ver. 35, 36. *Women received their dead, raised to life.* The widow of Zerepheth, *1 Kings, chap. xv.* and the Shunamite, *2 Kings, chap. iv.* *Tortured, not accepting deliverance.* Those who suffered in the time of the Maccabees, *see 1 Macc. chap. i. 2 Macc. chap. vi. vii.*

Ver. 37. This verse alludes to the sufferings which the ancient prophets endured.

Ver.

Ver. 39. This verse signifies that all those faithful persons, though, without doubt, they are in a state of happiness, are not yet put in possession of their heavenly inheritance, nor will they be till the general resurrection, when faithful Christians will receive their inheritance also.

We should learn from this chapter that faith in God's promises has always been a principal part of true religion; that a true faith is shown by obedience to God's commandments, and by patience under all the trials of life, but particularly by enduring persecution with courage and faithfulness. What the Apostle recommends he practised himself; see a short summary of his sufferings, *1 Corinthians, chap xi. ver. 23, &c.* and all the Apostles testified their faith by suffering martyrdom, as did great numbers of Christians in the early ages of the church, which they certainly would not have done unless they had looked forward to an eternal inheritance. When we reflect on what others have done and suffered for the sake of the Christian religion, how strange must it appear that many Christians of the present day live in a state of indifference in respect to those heavenly things which Christ died to purchase; indulging themselves in the practice of vices and follies which he has strictly forbidden.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 5. The *witnesses, ver. 1*, are the holy patriarchs and martyrs, brought forth as examples in the foregoing chapter. If what is done on earth by many who call themselves Christians be seen by these holy persons, how shameful must such conduct appear in their eyes! To avoid appearing in so disgraceful a light, and in order to obtain a share in the blessings prepared for the faithful, every Christian must endeavour to get the better of his darling sin, whatever it may happen to be, and as far as possible to subdue all worldly care, that nothing may hinder them in their Christian course; setting the example of our blessed Saviour in view, as the Apostle recommends, *ver. 2*. In the times of the Gospel in which we live, we are not put to such severe trials as the saints and martyrs were; and even the worst of their sufferings fell greatly short of those our Saviour himself endured.

Ver. 5 to 14. Observe here, that the afflictions which are

sent upon the faithful in this life are, like the corrections of a kind father, designed for their good; we should therefore, as the Apostle advises, bear them patiently. *Ver. 12, 13*, signify, take courage, and do not turn out of the way of Christianity on account of afflictions and persecutions.

Ver. 14 to 18. We are made *holy* first in our *baptism*, and afterwards by the renewing of the Holy Ghost on our repentance. Observe, *ver. 15*, those who give way to wickedness forfeit the grace of God. *Ver. 16.* Esau is called a *profane person*, because he had no faith in the promise of God respecting the land of Canaan. What good, said he, *will this birthright do me*. In this manner many who are called Christians flight *their birthright* as heirs to the kingdom of heaven, and part with it for trifles. Remember there is no repentance in the grave!

Ver. 18 to the end. The comparison which is here made between the *Law* and the *Gospel* shows, that we live under a covenant much more excellent than that of the Jews. Call to mind, or read in the Bible the history of the giving of the law from mount Sinai, *Exodus, chap. xix. xx.* and observe what the Apostle says *ver. 22*, which should lead every one to reflect on the glory and happiness prepared for all the faithful. We should also reflect on the dreadful hazard we run if we refuse or slight that Gospel, by which alone we can secure an interest in these heavenly things. It will be of no avail to us that we have been taken into the Christian Covenant, unless we lead a life of faith and holiness. For to the wicked the *wrath of God will be a consuming fire*.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1. By *brotherly love* is meant Christian charity, which teaches us to consider all mankind as our brethren, to whom we should do good offices when in our power. *Ver. 2.* alludes to Abraham and Lot's entertaining *angels*, supposing them to be *men*. Observe *ver. 5*, that God will judge the impure: also, how strongly the Apostle recommends contentment, and that the faithful may build their hopes in times of poverty upon a divine promise in Psalm lvi. Observe the injunction, *ver. 7*, concerning the ministers of the church. Also, *ver. 8*, that the *end of their conversation, or teaching*, is to establish faith

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe carefully, *ver. 9, 17*, which should guard us from all *strange*, that is, all *irregular* preaching. Many, in our own times, are carried about with divers and strange doctrines, to the great injury of the church and the ministry. *Ver. 10, 11*, alluded to the Jewish sacrifices; and *ver. 12* gives the reason for our Lord's suffering out of Jerusalem. *Ver. 13*. To *bear his reproach*, means to be contented to bear reproach and persecution for Christ's sake. *Ver. 14, 15*. The *fruit of our lips*, which Christians are to offer instead of the sacrifices of the Jewish law, are prayer, praise and thanksgiving, accompanied with works of charity. Observe, *ver. 17*, which recommends submission to our spiritual pastors. *Ver. 18* shows that we should pray for our ministers. *Ver. 19*. St. Paul was at that time a prisoner.

The excellent prayer with which the Apostle concludes this Epistle, we ought to offer frequently for ourselves, and for one another.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

THIS Epistle, and the following ones, are called *general*, because they were not, like St. Paul's Epistles, written to particular churches or persons, but addressed to Christians in general. This of St. James, the son of Alphaeus, was directed to the Jews of the twelve tribes, who had been long dispersed in different countries, and had embraced the Christian religion. The design of it was to strengthen them against persecutions, and to guard them against certain false teachers and hypocrites, who professing themselves Christians, and boasting that they knew more than others, lived in sin and licentiousness.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. Observe, that St. James, though (on account of his being related either to Joseph, or the Virgin Mary) he is called sometimes the *brother of our Lord*, styles himself the *servant of Jesus Christ*. He was one of the twelve Apostles. *Ver. 2*. By *temptations*, we may understand all kinds of afflictions and trials. *Ver. 4*. To *let patience have her perfect work*, means to continue patient as long as God sees fit that our trials should last. *Ver. 5* By *wisdom*, may here

be understood the *help of the Holy Spirit*, which is always granted according to the necessity of those who ask for it with faith. See *Matt. chap. vii. ver. 7, &c. also Luke, xi. ver. 13.*

Ver. 9, 10. The Christian of low degree, and the Christian who has abundance of worldly riches, are in respect to their spiritual concerns upon an equal footing; the one has cause to *rejoice*, as an heir to an heavenly inheritance, and the other should be *humble minded*, from the thought that his riches do not set him up above his *brother of low degree*, in the sight of God. *Ver. 11* relates to those who trust in riches for happiness. *Ver. 12* shows that the faithful Christian who endures temptation is richer than the wicked man who has abundance of this world's good.

Ver. 13 to 19. These verses show that God has not predestinated any to wickedness, but that we fall into sin by giving way to our own passions. Nothing but good can come from God; after making us his children by adoption and grace, we may be certain God will never lead us into sin, nor deny us what is good for us if we pray with faith.

Ver. 19 to the end. In these verses the Apostle shows how those who have been regenerated and born of water and of the Spirit, in holy baptism, should conduct themselves.

Observe these verses particularly, and let them sink deep in your mind that you may not suppose, as many do, that religion consists chiefly in hearing sermons, and feeling at the time what the preacher says. *Ver. 21*, the *engrafted word* means the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The *perfect law of liberty* means the same Gospel, as a rule of life. *Ver. 27.* Observe this verse, which plainly shows that *pure religion* does not consist entirely in *faith*, but in works of charity also, particularly towards the *widow* and the *orphan*. *To keep ourselves unspotted from the world*, is to avoid all those vices which are so common in the world, and contrary to the precepts of Christianity.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 14. These verses teach us that Christians, whatever be their rank and degree, should not despise the poor on account of their poverty. It appears from this passage of Scripture that in the Apostles' days some rich people did so. Observe here the regard which our Lord Jesus Christ has for the

the poor when they are faithful to him. When our Lord was upon earth he put the highest honour upon them by choosing to place himself amongst them. The *Son of Man*, as he said, *had not where to lay his head*; see *Matt. chap. viii. ver. 20*. Most of those to whom our Lord preached were poor people: it was the same in the days of the Apostles. But we must be careful not to think that riches are in themselves a hindrance to salvation; for the verse we are considering says, that the promises respecting the kingdom of heaven are *to them who love God*, and many rich people do so with great sincerity. *Ver. 7* signifies Do not, whatever be your station, disgrace by your conduct the honourable title of a Christian. The *royal law* means the commandments of God; one table of which relates to our *duty to our neighbour*. *Ver. 10* signifies that we must not set aside any one of God's commandments, or wilfully continue in the breach of a single point. The Apostle explains this in the next verse.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe that in these verses St. James clearly teaches that *faith without works* is dead; and what he says should caution us not to place our whole dependence on *faith*: yet we must ever remember that it is through *the grace of God* alone, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, that our good works, when accompanied with a sincere faith, are reckoned to us as righteous works.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter St. James teaches that the tongue may occasion many evils, and that by our discourse we may give great offence, which should lead us to be very cautious what we say respecting God and our neighbours. *Ver. 1. Be not many masters*, should be a caution to such Christians as are not of the ministry, not to set themselves up for teachers of religion, lest they cause division and discord in the church. *Ver. 3*. Those who use themselves to the habit of swearing, as some do who profess to be Christians, should particularly notice this verse. Observe, *ver. 13*, what kind of conversation is esteemed wise in the sight of God; and *ver. 14*, what is said of such discourse as is very common in the world; also, *ver. 15*, what is said of that wisdom which does not agree with religious wisdom. Take notice, *ver. 17*, how the wisdom which is from *above*, that is, from heaven, is to be distinguished.

guished. *Ver. 18.* The *fruit* of righteousness means its *reward*, namely, everlasting life and happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 11. From these verses we learn that giving way to our passions is the principal cause of the many evils we are apt to complain of; and that we therefore ought to strive against the violence of them, and particularly against the inordinate love of this world, which is the source of all irregular desires. About the time this Epistle was written the Jews had great wars and fightings, not with foreign enemies only, but even among themselves, as Josephus, a Jewish historian, shows. *Ver. 4.* *Adulterers* and *adulteresses*, signify those *men* and *women* who set their minds upon the things of this world instead of God and heaven. Observe here what the Apostle calls this love of the world: and *ver. 5*, in what light God regards those who prefer the friendship of the world to his divine love and favour, which should lead us to consider what a dreadful thing it is to be regarded as the *enemy of God!* Observe, *ver. 6*, how God favours the humble, and take notice, *ver. 7*, that though the devil has certainly power to tempt us, he cannot overcome us if we strive against his temptations. *Ver. 8.* To *draw nigh unto God*, is to humble ourselves before him with repentance and prayer; God will then draw nigh to us with *mercy*. To *cleanse the hands from sin* is to leave off all kinds of injustice; to *purify the heart* is to get rid of the pollution of sin. This cannot be done without the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit will be given to those who ask it. The *double minded* are those whose hearts are divided betwixt God and this world. *Ver. 9, 10*, instruct us how to proceed in order to gain the help of the Holy Spirit to cleanse us from sin.

Ver. 11 to 13. Observe what the Apostle says of evil speaking. By *the law*, *ver. 11*, he means the *moral law*, concerning our duty to our neighbour. *Ver. 12.* The *law-giver* is God.

Ver. 13 to the end. These verses teach us not to depend upon success in any of our own plans, but to place our reliance upon the providence of God. Observe, *ver. 17*, which intimates that *sins of ignorance* will be pardoned; but remember that ignorance itself is a sin when people neglect the means of instruction.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 7. These verses relate to *wicked* rich men, not to those who make a good use of their riches. They should lead such persons as are in a low estate, to be thankful that they are not exposed to the dangers and temptations of a state of opulence.

Ver. 7 to 13. In these verses the Apostle recommends patience to those who are afflicted, oppressed, or persecuted. When the Lord comes he will recompense every one according to his faith and his works, as surely as he sends the harvest to reward the toil of the husbandman. *Ver. 8.* The coming of the Lord to deliver the righteous, might be said to be *near* in the Apostles time, because death would put an end to their troubles. *Ver. 9* was intended to prevent a very common fault among Christians, that of being envious at the prosperity of another. Envy shows itself sometimes in trifles, but it is always a sin. Every one who suffers afflictions in this world, should lay to heart what the Apostle says *ver. 10, 11.* *Ver. 12* was designed to restrain Christians from using oaths in the ordinary transactions of life. When the law of the land requires oaths to be taken, they must be submitted to.

Ver. 13 to 19. Prayer is the only sure means to obtain comfort in affliction; psalm singing with *grace in the heart*, as the Apostle speaks to the Ephesians, *chap. v. ver. 19*, is the most joyful of all employments. *Ver. 14* shows that in times of sickness we should send for our proper ministers to pray with us. The Apostles and first ministers had a miraculous gift of healing, and they *anointed the sick with oil* according to the custom of the Jews; but we do not find that they had any express command from our Saviour to do so, his words were, *heal the sick*, see *Matt. chap. x. ver. 8.* The *prayer of faith* we may conclude to have been that of the Apostles, to whom our Saviour gave a promise, that *whatsoever they should ask in his name should be granted.* See *Matt. chap. xxi. ver. 21.* and *Mark. xi. ver. 22, 23;* see also *Acts, chap. iii. ver. 16.* The sins that were to be forgiven, *ver. 15*, probably were those for which the *sickness* was sent. See *1 Corinthians chap. xi. ver. 30.* We must not suppose

from this practice of the Apostles and first ministers, and the effect of it, that all the ministers of the Gospel were to have the same power; neither must we imagine that the ministers of the Gospel had at any time the power to forgive the sins of those who confessed to them, even the Apostles did not pretend to this; when they healed any one, they ascribed the glory to Christ—*Jesus Christ maketh thee whole, see Acts, chap. ix. ver. 34; see also Acts chapter iv. the miracle of curing the lame man by Peter and John. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, ver. 16, is understood as relating principally to the prayer of faith offered up by the first ministers, but from the repeated exhortations of the Apostles, to pray for one another, we have reason to believe that such prayers as the following will be effectual—If one Christian pray for another, that he may be brought to a sense of his sins, that he may supported and comforted, that he may either be delivered from his afflictions, or that they may be sanctified to him; in short, every thing that the Church in her office now directs to be done by the ministers or the friends of the sick, they may do with faith and hope. See the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, in the Common Prayer Book, and the Office for the administration of the Holy Communion to the Sick. But we must keep clear of the Popish doctrine, that the priest himself has power to absolve those from their sins who confess to him. Ver. 17. Elijah had not the power of himself to prevent rain from falling upon the earth even for an hour; his prayer was inspired by the Lord, it was a prophetic one; the thing falling out according to his prayer showed that he was a true prophet, and this was farther confirmed afterwards when the rain fell after his prayers.*

Ver. 19, 20. These verses encourage Christians to exhort and admonish those whom they see going on in the way of unbelief, and leading a wicked life. But we must be careful not to suppose, that if we try to help the salvation of others, we may neglect our own, for this can never be the meaning of the text; we may however hope that many of our lesser sins will be forgiven through Christ's intercession on this account.

FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

IF we call to mind that St. Peter was originally a poor illiterate fisherman, we shall perceive the power of the Holy Ghost, which endued him with the gift of tongues, and filled him with such wisdom as none of his enemies were able to gainsay or resist, *see Luke, chap. xxi. ver. 15*, and recollect St. Peter's discourses after he had been endued with power from on high, with which this Epistle will be found to agree in every respect.

CHAPTER I.

Ver 1 to 10. We read in the *second chapter of Acts*, that when the first Christians on the day of Pentecost *spake with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance*, there were among the multitudes who came together to hear them, *Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven*, and some of the nations mentioned by St. Peter in the beginning of this Epistle, are named among them. When St. Peter had ended his sermon, as the same chapter informs us, *ver. 41*, they that gladly received the word *were baptized to the number of three thousand*. And they continued *steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, or taking the Lord's Supper, and in prayer*. This will enable us to understand why the Apostle in his Epistle calls them *elect*, and talks of their being *sanctified by the spirit*. In the following verses, the Apostle shows what a happiness it is to be a Christian, but reminds them at the same time that they owed every thing to the *grace of God*, and that without this they could not stand the fiery trial of persecution, to which with other Christians they would be exposed.

Ver. 10 to 13. The ancient prophets foretold many things relating to the Messiah, and though they lived ages before the Apostles, they were in fact ministers to those who were ministers of the Gospel. Observe, *ver. 12*, that the redemption of mankind by a suffering redeemer, is a subject of contemplation to the *angels in heaven*; and it appears from Scripture that it has been in part revealed to them, for when our blessed Saviour was born angels carried the
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glad tidings of his birth to the shepherds. The angel who was sent to our Saviour in his agony, doubtless knew the end for which he suffered; and those blessed Spirits who appeared at his resurrection and ascension, were acquainted with his exaltation to the right hand of God.

Ver. 13 to the end. In these verses the Apostle calls upon Christians steadfastly to resolve to lead a pure and holy life, as children of God, and worthy of the Saviour who had purchased them to himself by his most precious blood. The revelation of Jesus Christ, *ver. 13*, means his coming in glory as the Son of God at the end of the world. *Ver. 20* signifies that the work of redemption through Christ was ordained before the world was created, that is, God foreknowing that mankind would forfeit everlasting life by sin, graciously resolved to restore it to them and to admit into heaven after death, all that would believe in his Son as their Saviour, and obey the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 22* shows that Christians are required to love one another. Observe, *ver. 24*, to what human life is compared, and consider of how much more importance that life is, which the word of God has made known to us.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe what Christians are to *lay aside* as unbecoming those who have had a new-birth unto righteousness. *Ver. 2.* The *sincere milk of the word*, means the pure doctrine of Scripture.

Ver. 5 to 11. Observe in these verses the Apostle's description of the *Church of God*, as of a holy temple composed of living stones, the chief of which is Christ himself. Observe also that in this holy temple of spiritual sacrifices the *worship of the heart* is to be offered up. *Ver. 6.* *Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone elect, precious*, is a text from the Prophecy of Isaiah, *chap. xxviii. ver. 16*, which foretold that the foundation of the christian Church should be laid at Jerusalem. Observe what Christ is, to those who believe in him, and what he will prove to those who reject him; a saviour to the one, an occasion of their downfall to the others. *Ver. 9, 10.* Observe the noble titles which the Apostle gives to true

true Christians, which should fill us with holy resolutions to live as become persons solemnly devoted to the service and glory of God.

Ver. 11 to 12. In these verses the Apostle shows how all such persons ought to live, not as those who are to remain always in it, but as strangers travelling to a heavenly country. Observe how he recommends *good works*. The *day of visitation*, signifies the time of persecution and affliction.

Ver. 13 to 18. Observe here that St. Peter gives the same directions concerning duties to kings and governors, as St. Paul does in his Epistles. Take notice of what he says *ver. 16*, concerning *liberty*, which plainly proves that this is greatly abused when it is made a pretence for malicious designs against the king and government we live under, and that as God has not put all mankind upon a footing of equality, it never can be right for them to try to be so. Such an attempt is unworthy of a Christian. *Ver. 17* should be our constant rule in respect to these things.

Ver. 18, 19. St. Peter here again like St. Paul recommends submission to masters; remember that many servants who were Christians, were in those days slaves to the Romans, who used them very cruelly. Christian servants are so far *free*, that they are not obliged to stay and endure such treatment, but they should not abuse their liberty by setting themselves up above reproof, as many do.

Ver. 20 to the end. What the Apostle says here, should lead Christians of every degree to the practice of the great virtues of patience and meekness, which made so principal a part of our blessed Saviour's character when he was upon earth. Observe, *ver. 22*, that our Lord had no sins of his own, and that it was for *our offences* he suffered, as Isaiah so long before prophesied, *see Isaiah, chap. liii. 3—5.*

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 8. The advice in these verses is the same in substance as that given in St. Paul's Epistles. How happy must it make a good wife to contribute to the conversion and reformation of a husband; but observe, *ver. 2*, this is to be attempted not with anger and reproach, but with meekness and respect. Observe also, *ver. 3, 4*, what are, in the sight of

of God, a woman's greatest ornaments. *To be afraid with amazement*, is to stand in such awe of a morose ill-natured husband, as to be afraid of performing the other duties of life. *Ver. 7.* *To dwell with a wife according to knowledge*, signifies to behave to her as becomes a christian man to a christian woman with whom he is united by the bands of holy wedlock; being kind and indulgent to her as of the weaker sex, but regarding her as his equal in respect to an inheritance in heaven. Husbands and wives should unite in prayer together, and not hinder one another from performing this duty.

Ver. 8 to 14. These verses contain advice suitable to all Christians, in which they should be of one heart and mind. *Ver. 12, 13* afford great comfort, and should arm Christians against the worst that can be done to them, either by men or devils. *To suffer for righteousness sake*, is to endure persecution, which the first Christians were perpetually exposed to, but the words are often misapplied by those, who because their false doctrine meets with opposition, call themselves persecuted. *To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*, is to think, that whatever God sees fit to inflict upon us, or to suffer to befall us, is just and righteous.

This is the answer which every Christian should make, when asked the reason why he believes in the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, and the resurrection from the dead, namely, that he believes it because it is revealed in the Scriptures; but Christians should avoid all angry disputes, with those who differ from them in some points.

Ver. 18 to the end. *Who the spirits in prison were*, is a very doubtful point. Perhaps they were those sinners before the flood, to whom the Lord preached by the mouth of Noah while the ark was building, who were in the state of prisoners that could not escape the punishment which was preparing for their obduracy and hardness of heart. Observe, *ver. 21*, that the *Sacrament of Baptism* is compared to Noah's ark, as being a means of salvation if accompanied by a good conscience. It is said by some that infants cannot have a *good conscience*; but this ought to be no hindrance to their being baptized, because they are capable of receiving the spiritual grace; and if the infants of christian parents are not baptized, they are in a worse state than the Jewish children

dren were who were admitted into the church of God by circumcision at eight days old; a rite that was in full force till after our Saviour's ascension, when the Apostles were inspired to preach that Circumcision was not necessary for Christians, Baptism being ordained in the room of it. Observe, *ver. 22*, what is said of our Saviour's exaltation, by an Apostle who was present when he ascended into heaven, and heard what the angels said of his being gone to the *right hand of God*.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 12. To *cease from sin* is to leave off all kinds of wickedness. This Christians should resolve to do; because, by their baptismal vow, they have engaged to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of the world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; but no one can so far get the better of the frailty of his nature as never to be guilty of any sins. Neither are we to suppose that we shall ever be in such a state of justification that no sins will be imputed to us; the real state of a baptized person is, that he is fully pardoned on sincere repentance, released from the punishment of all his former sins, and renewed unto righteousness by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 2, 3.* The Gentiles lived in the indulgence of every vicious passion and inclination; see *Romans, chap. i.* Observe, *ver. 5*, that there will be a day of judgment. *Ver. 6.* Those that *are dead*, signified the Gentile world who were dead in trespasses and sins, having no promise of eternal life. *Ver. 6.* Death is to every one the end of all earthly things. *Ver. 8.* The same expression *Charity shall cover a multitude of sins*, was used by St. James, *chap. v. ver. 20*. It shows that charity is an excellent thing, and of great use to those who practise it; but we must remember that charity is a word of large extent, and not confined to alms-giving; see the character of this virtue, *1 Cor. chap. xiii.* *Ver. 9.* *Hospitality* signifies charity to strangers, or to persons not of the same nation and religion; this is a branch of Christian charity. *Ver. 10.* In respect to things of this life every person should consider himself as the steward of God, who will call him to account at the last day for the use or abuse of them. See our Saviour's parables of the talents and the pounds, *Matt. chap. xxv. and Luke, xix.*
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The *oracles of God*, *ver. 11*, mean the Scriptures, which ministers are to make the foundation of all their discourses.

Ver. 12 to the end. The *fiery trial*, meant the persecutions which they would be exposed to. Observe what encouragement the Apostle gives Christians to endure all these with fortitude and courage. *Ver. 15.* It brings a great scandal on Christ and his religion when any one who bears the name of Christian is brought to justice for such crimes as are here named. *Ver. 16.* To suffer for Christ is both joyful and honourable. Martyrs are supported under their sufferings in a surprizing manner. St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr; see an account of his death, *Acts, chap. vii.*

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 5. These verses were addressed to the pastors of the church. *Ver. 2.* To *feed the flock of God* signifies to give to the members of the church the *food of the soul*, which is, religious instruction. We must not understand from this verse that ministers are to receive no recompence for their labours, but that they must not be covetous and greedy of gain. *Ver. 4.* The *chief shepherd* means our Lord Jesus Christ; see *John, chap. x.* Faithful ministers will have a most glorious reward.

Ver. 5 to 12. These verses instruct not only the younger ministers, but all people, according to their age and condition, how to behave to their pastors, and how to submit to persecutions and afflictions. *Ver. 7.* The care we are encouraged to cast upon God, is that anxious care which makes us fear we shall not be provided for, or that we shall fall into misery beyond bearing; see *Matt. chap. vi. ver. 25, &c.* *Ver. 8, 9.* The *devil* at that time employed his temptations to make Christians forsake Christ for fear of persecution, and he is always on the watch to ruin us, that is, to hinder our salvation; but over those who *resist him* he has no power. We resist the devil when we strive against temptation, and pray for the help of the Holy Spirit. See *James, chap. iv. ver. 7, and Ephesians, chap. vi. ver. 11, &c.*

Ver. 11 to the end. By *Babylon*, *ver. 13*, is understood the city of Rome; called so figuratively, on account of its resembling that once famous city in idolatry and wickedness.

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 5. This verse shows that the writer of this and the former Epistle was Simon Peter, the Apostle of our Lord, not another Peter. We learn from the following verses that in the Gospel God has graciously afforded every thing necessary for the attainment of that righteousness which cometh by faith, and which will be rewarded with everlasting life in heaven.

Ver. 5 to 12. In these verses the Apostle instructs Christians what to do in order to make their calling and election sure, which plainly shows that those who have been called into the Christian faith, and received the grace of God, may *fall off from grace*, and lose the salvation to which they have been elected, that is, may forfeit the eternal inheritance to which they would have been entitled had they continued to live as those who have been adopted into the family of God ought to live. Observe, *ver. 9*, that those who have not the virtues of Christianity are in a state of *spiritual blindness*, though they have been purged from the sins they committed before they were baptized. Observe also, *ver. 10, 11*, what is promised to those who do cultivate these virtues in themselves and practise them.

Ver. 12 to 16. By *this tabernacle*, *ver. 14*, the Apostle meant his body. It appears from these verses that St. Peter knew by revelation that he should very shortly suffer martyrdom, and that he was desirous to give full instruction to the churches before his departure from this world.

Ver. 16 to the end. Observe what the Apostle says here concerning the doctrine which he preached, and recollect that St. Peter was present at our Lord's transfiguration; *see Matt. chap. xvii. and Luke, chap. ix.* This Apostle was also one of those to whom John the Baptist gave an account of what he heard and saw when he baptized Christ; and it is very plain from these verses that St. Peter believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, as he had indeed declared to our Lord himself; *see Matt. xvi. ver. 15, 16.* Observe,

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ver. 19, 20, what the Apostle says concerning *prophecy*, meaning those predictions concerning the Messiah, which were written so long before by the ancient prophets, and so exactly fulfilled in Christ, to which our Lord himself often appealed.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 10. In whatever way God is pleased to reveal his will to mankind, some among them, through the suggestion of Satan, always attempt to set up an outward resemblance of it, but different in its design. When God sent inspired prophets to call the Israelites to repentance, and to foretel that Jerusalem would be destroyed, false prophets arose who persuaded them that they were in no danger. In like manner false teachers started up who contradicted the doctrine of the Apostles, by denying what they taught concerning redemption by Jesus Christ; and St. Peter in these verses foretels that there would continue to be false teachers, and that many would be led away by them, which has come to pass; for from the Apostle's days there have been false teachers, many of them calling themselves Christians, who have denied the *Lord that bought them*, by saying he was not the Son of God, and that he did not die to purchase the salvation of mankind. Observe, *ver.* 1, by what name St. Peter calls this false doctrine, and to what they who hold it expose themselves. By *heresy* is meant any opinion of private men which is contrary to the revealed will of God. The Papists call every thing *heresy* that does not agree with their false doctrine; and many good and pious Christians have been burnt at the stake as *hereticks* because they would not adopt them. But it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity to persecute any for difference of opinion. *Ver.* 4 shows that *hereticks* will receive their punishment from the Lord himself at the day of judgment: we should resist their doctrine, and resolve to suffer persecution in any shape, even to martyrdom, rather than join with those *who deny the Lord that bought them*, for they are in league with the rebellious angels.

Ver. 7 to 10. These verses afford encouragement to those who are persecuted.

Ver. 10 to the end. Observe, *ver. 10*, what kind of people persecutors are. Observe, *ver. 12*, what the Apostle says of those who *speake evil of the governing powers*. The generality of those who do so have not any judgment of their own in these high matters; but a few leading men raise an outcry against the king, or governor, and persuade the ignorant to think themselves oppressed, who are drawn into their plots without thought or reflection, and bring down upon themselves in the end ruin and destruction. The *governors of the church* are often in like manner calumniated—nay, there are persons in the world who speak presumptuously against God himself, and despise his holy laws. Against all these Christians should be constantly on their guard. Observe, in particular, what is said, *ver. 19*, concerning the promise of *liberty* which these men give—a promise which, as the Apostle observes, *ver. 20*, ends in their being brought again into slavery to the devil. To conform to the laws of the Gospel is the only *true liberty*. Having been cleansed from the pollution of *original sin*, Christians should endeavour to improve more and more in holiness, and never suffer themselves to be enticed to renounce their faith, or to live impure lives, like the hereticks and other sinners, whom St. Peter describes in this chapter. Observe, *ver. 15*, that the Apostle refers to the history of *Balaam and his ass*, in the Book of Numbers, as a certain fact.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 11. Observe the prophecy in these verses, that scoffers would arise in the times of the Gospel who would make a mock at the Scriptures. We should therefore not be surprized at finding such in our own days, but we should be very careful not to be deceived into an opinion that the world will not come to an end, and that there will be no resurrection or day of judgment, for we are here told by an inspired Apostle that as the old world was destroyed by water, the present world will be destroyed by fire.

Ver. 11 to the end. St. Peter here teaches us to apply what was revealed to him in the foregoing verses; and we should keep his instructions in mind that we may make a good use of the mercy and forbearance of God. Observe *ver. 16*, that

St. Peter refers to St. Paul's Epistles as confirming the doctrines he himself preached and wrote ; but he warns the *unlearned* not to attempt to make out the meaning of *every text in St. Paul's Epistles*, as by so doing they may fall into destructive errors, which many actually have done. All that is really necessary to salvation is so clear and plain in the Scriptures that any well-disposed mind may, with a little assistance, clearly understand it ; and with the knowledge of *this* the *unlearned* should rest contented ; making those things the subjects of their meditation and study, by which they can be *edified*. The great concern of a Christian is *to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, which those alone can do who read the Scriptures with an humble desire to know the truth, and with a sincere resolution to follow the precepts of the Gospel.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

Sr. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, was the constant companion of our blessed Lord during his ministry, and the writer of the Gospel which bears his name. The design of this Epistle was to secure Christians from being seduced by such *heretics* as deny that Christ is the **ETERNAL SON OF GOD**, and that *he came in the flesh*, or our nature.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 5. Observe here, that what the Apostles preached concerning Christ, as the **ETERNAL SON OF GOD**, they themselves knew for a certainty to be true ; and they called upon the world to believe it, because, without this faith, no one could be admitted into that *fellowship*, or *union*, with God through Christ, which is promised to true believers as the adopted children of God, and which fills them with joy in believing.

Ver. 5 to the end. Observe, that the doctrine in these verses is delivered by the Apostle as *a message*, which he received from Jesus Christ himself, in order to give Christians just notions of God, and of the obligations they are under to lead pure and holy lives. By *light* is meant *righteousness* ; by *darkness*,

darkness, wickedness. To walk in darkness is to lead a wicked life; to walk in the light is to lead a holy life, according to the commandments of God. If, as Christians, we strive to do this our sins will be pardoned for Christ's sake; but we must remember that *all men are sinners*, and stand in need of forgiveness, and that it is required of us to *confess our sins*; if we do so with full purpose of amendment God will certainly forgive us, as he has graciously promised. This chapter clearly shows that Faith will not save us without *holiness of life*.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1 to 3. By *his little children*, it is supposed the Apostle meant his own converts, those whom he himself had brought to desire a new birth unto righteousness in the Sacrament of Baptism; but as we have reason to believe *infants* were baptized, there might, at the time the Apostle wrote, be many children to whom this appellation applied; for what the Apostle taught in the foregoing chapter children may learn in their early years; and as soon as children are capable of confessing their sins, they ought to have the comfort of knowing that they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, for whose sake they will be forgiven. The sins of children are for the most part *sins of infirmity*, and for all such Christ has made atonement, whether those who commit them are children or adults; but we must not reckon as sins of infirmity those offences which we are guilty of through carelessness.

Ver. 3, 4. Observe here the rule which the Apostle gives for all Christians to judge themselves by, whether they know Jesus Christ, or not; that is, whether they know him as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. If they do they will surely keep his commandments. *Ver. 6.* To abide in Christ is to continue a member of his church. To walk as he walked, is to follow his blessed example. *Ver. 7.* What the Apostle here taught was the same doctrine as John the Baptist and our Lord himself had preached. *Ver. 8.* This indeed was new, that those who were once in spiritual darkness were enlightened by the Gospel.

Ver. 9 to 12. Observe, that whoever is not in charity with his neighbour is reckoned amongst those who are in spiritual darkness; but it is a darkness of his own choosing, for the

light of the Gospel shows it to be the duty of every Christian to love his brother, that is, his neighbour; especially his fellow Christians.

Ver. 12 to 15. The first of these verses is very comfortable to good children. By *fathers*, *ver. 13*, we may understand persons who had been long in the faith—by *young men*, those who had devoted themselves to God in their youth—by *little children*, those who had been made Christians in their infancy.

Ver. 15 to 28. The doctrine in these verses is suited to Christians of all ages. *Ver. 15, 16, 17*, agree with our Saviour's exhortation, *Matt. chap. vi. ver. 19*, and St. Paul's advice, *Col. chap. iii. ver. 1, &c.* To love the world, signifies to take delight in worldly pleasures instead of desiring heavenly treasures. The meaning of the word *Antichrist* is, an opposer of Christ. The chief Antichrist is Satan himself, but all who deny Christ, and oppose his doctrine, are Antichrists also; we find there were such in St. John's time. The Apostle warns *children* against them, as we may suppose, because it is the aim of these opposers of the Gospel to corrupt the minds of the young and ignorant. *Ver. 19.* Those that *went out from us*, meant some who professed themselves to be Christians; but their holding such doctrine as the Apostles never taught, proved they were not so; and by this rule should all young persons be instructed to know the Antichrists of their own times. The *unction*, *ver. 20*, means the anointing of the Holy Spirit, by which the Apostles were made ministers of the Gospel. Take particular notice of the following verses to *ver. 27*; the doctrine they contain should be taught to *children*, that they, as well as persons of riper years, may be guarded against the seducers of the present day. *Ver. 27.* By the *anointing*, is meant what is called, *ver. 20*, the *unction of the Holy One*, the *gift of the Holy Ghost* to the Apostles, by means of which they revealed the whole of the Gospel, and were enabled to point out false doctrine. Having the teaching of the Apostles, either by their preaching or writings, it might be said that Christians *had this anointing abiding in them*, that is, in the church; so that they stood in need of no other teaching. We must be careful not to understand these expressions in this verse as if God had given to every

every individual of mankind the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that he might know all things by an *inward teaching*; for were this the case, the preaching of the Apostles themselves would have been needless. As the *unction of the Holy One* was certainly with the Apostles, we should keep to their doctrine, which doctrine is taught in the Established Church; we have therefore no occasion to forsake it, as many do, in order as they say to *hear the Gospel*—for the Gospel is certainly preached by the ministers of the Church.

Ver. 28, 29. To *abide in Christ*, is to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; *Hebrews, x. ver. 25.* Observe, *ver. 29*, that every true child of God is known by his *works*.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 3. These verses should lead us to reflect on the wonderful goodness of God in making sinful creatures his adopted children through Jesus Christ. At the resurrection of the dead the true children of God will experience a most glorious change; see *1 Corinthians, chap. xv. ver. 51, &c.*

Ver. 3 to 11. We should be very careful not to conceive from these verses that those who are *born of God*, that is, those who have had a *new birth unto righteousness*, never will commit sin; for every human creature to the end of life must be subject to sins through the infirmity of his nature and the temptation of the devil; but every one who considers what his duty is, as an *adopted child of God*, will endeavour to lead a pure and holy life, after the example of our blessed Redeemer; and while he does so he cannot fall into a sinful course of life; for the *seed*, that is, the *spiritual grace* bestowed on him when he was baptized, *remains with him* to lead him to repentance and to assist his endeavours after purity, and he will be distinguished as the *child of God* by his *good works*, as the children of the devil are distinguished by their *wicked works*.

Ver. 11 to the end. Compare what the Apostle says in this chapter concerning *brotherly love* with our Saviour's words, *John, chap. xiii. ver. 34, 35*, and *chap. xv. ver. 12*. Observe here, *ver. 12*, that Cain is reckoned a child of the devil. *Ver. 13* by the *world*, are meant worldly minded people who

think of no other world but this. Observe the following verses what is said concerning *brotherly love*. By our *heart* is meant our *conscience*; this, unless people have hardened themselves in wickedness, will make them feel uncomfortable when they have done wrong, and comfortable when they have done right; in the latter case they may have humble confidence that God approves them. But no one can have a good conscience unless he really keeps God's commandments. Observe *ver. 23, 24*.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1 to 7. By the *spirits*, *ver. 1*, we are to understand those persons who pretend to teach by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To *try them*, is to consider well whether they really are inspired teachers or not; and the Apostle in *ver. 2, 3*, has given us a certain rule to distinguish such persons from the Antichrists mentioned in the former chapter; but we are not to carry this rule so far as to believe that every one who confesses Jesus Christ to have come in the flesh, is *immediately inspired*; for this truth may be learnt from the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles; and it is no uncommon thing for persons who believe and preach this doctrine to add to it, as proceeding from the Holy Spirit, imparted to themselves, doctrines quite contrary to other parts of Scripture. In this they certainly, when sincere, deceive themselves as well as their hearers; for the *gift* of preaching, by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, has long ceased; all that is necessary to be known and believed being now to be found in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. The Antichrists of the Apostles' times were the Jews, who despised Christ and the kingdom of heaven offered by him, and expected a Messiah, to come as a powerful prince, and set up a great earthly kingdom like that of David and Solomon.

Ver. 7 to the end. Observe in these verses how strongly the Apostle again recommends *brotherly love*, or Christian charity, and shows that those who have it not cannot be the children of God. Observe *ver. 9, 10*, how God manifested, or made known, his love towards us; and that it was not for any merit of ours God *so loved us*, but from his own mercy and goodness, therefore we should love our fellow creatures so as to be ready to show compassion to them whether we have had

had proofs or not of their loving us. If such be our disposition we may be sure that the Spirit of God, the *good seed* sown in our hearts at our Baptism, remains in us. *Ver. 14, 15, 16.* The Apostle asserts, from his own knowledge, that God the Father actually sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and speaks of faith in him as another proof of our having the Spirit of God dwelling in us, according to our Saviour's promise, *John, chap. xiv.*; without this love for our fellow creatures our love of God is imperfect because we only obey his commandments *in part*; but if we have such a love of God and our neighbour as will lead us to keep what our Saviour, *Matt. xxii. ver. 36, &c.* calls *the two great commandments*, we may look forward to the day of judgment with the confidence of hope, instead of fear and dread.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1 to 9. From these verses we learn that none are the true children of God but those who believe in his Son, and keep his commandments; and that this is no difficult task—also, that through faith in Christ we may overcome the temptations of the world. *Ver. 6* means that Jesus Christ who was baptized with water by John the Baptist, and shed his blood for mankind, was really the Son of God. *Ver. 7.* In this text we have the doctrine of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three divine persons in one God. How this can be, is beyond our power to comprehend, but while we cannot understand our own nature, consisting of body and soul, we must not wonder that we should not be able to understand the nature of the Godhead, so infinitely above us. In the New Testament we read of the FATHER as GOD, of the SON as GOD, and of the HOLY GHOST as GOD, yet we are repeatedly told that there is but ONE GOD; these three therefore must be in that ONE GOD, which is all that can be known by us;

Ver. 9 to 16. God the Father bore witness to Christ as his Son at his baptism, and at his transfiguration; see *Matt. chap. iii. ver. 17* and *chap. xvi. ver. 5.* To have (the Son of God, *ver. 12*), is to have faith in him as a Saviour. *Ver. 14, 15,* signify that those who have a true faith, that is, those who believe what God has revealed, and do what he has commanded, may be sure that God will attend to their prayers,

unless they should pray for things that would be hurtful to them.

Ver. 16 to the end. This is understood to relate to the prayers which the Apostles made for those who were punished with divers diseases on account of their sins. *A sin unto death* is understood to mean a sin which was to be punished with the death of the body; see *James, chap. v. ver. 15*—no prayers of men can save others from eternal death. *Ver. 18* means that the children of God will not commit sins like the wicked, but will strive to keep themselves pure; and that while they do so the devil cannot injure them. *Ver. 19.* Those *that were of God* meant the Christians. The Roman empire was at that time called *the world*, and the whole of it was given up to idolatry and wickedness. *Ver. 20* shows the difference betwixt true Christians, and idolaters and infidels. *Ver. 21.* Observe that the Apostle ends as he began with addressing himself to *little children*; the advice he here gives is such as children can understand, and Satan's artifices are certainly directed against them.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

VER. 1. The *Elder* was the Apostle himself; the *Elect Lady* means the *Christian Lady*. From the Apostle's address to her, we may judge that she was a person of great zeal and piety, and that she brought up her children in the true Christian faith. We may observe that St. John writes the very same doctrine to this Lady, as is found in his General Epistles. *Ver. 10* should make Christians cautious not to form familiar friendships with declared unbelievers. To with success to such persons, in spreading their doctrine, is to become a partaker of their crime. *Ver. 13.* *Elect Sister* means *Christian Sister*.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

Who Gaius was, to whom this Epistle was addressed, is not known; but we may perceive that he was a true and faithful

ful Christian. *Ver. 4.* By *his children*, St. John meant those whom he had himself converted. Observe that *Gaius* is praised by the Apostle for his *hospitality* to his christian brethren, particularly to those, who on account of persecution fled from place to place. *Diotrephes* seems to have been one of those ministers who opposed the Apostles in some of their doctrine. Observe the good advice of St. John *ver. 10, 11.*

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.

VER. 1. St. Jude was Judas the Apostle, distinguished from Judas Iscariot, by the title of the brother of James; *see Luke vi. ver. 16.* His Epistle bears great resemblance to the second Epistle of St. Peter. *Ver. 3.* The *common salvation*, meant the salvation which was open to Jews and Gentiles. To *contend for the faith*, does not mean to fight for it, or to persecute those who differ from us; but steadfastly to maintain the pure doctrine delivered *once for all* by the Evangelists and Apostles, without mixing with it any *new doctrines* that may be set forth by persons pretending to be inspired or enlightened. *Ver. 4* shows what corruptions had already crept into the Church in those early days. The Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ were the same Divine Being, appearing in the world under different characters. *Ordained to this condemnation*, signifies that a punishment was ordained of God for ungodly men in general, before the creation of the world. *Ver. 6* means the devil and his host who were once angels in heaven. *Ver. 7.* The fire which destroyed *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, is perhaps called *eternal fire*, because the cities were destroyed by it for ever. *Ver. 8.* *Those dreamers who despised dominion, and spake evil of dignities*, teaching, as we may judge, that all men were equal, and that there should be no rulers, were those who, *ver. 4*, are said to *have turned the grace of God*, their christian liberty, *into licentiousness*. What is said, *ver. 9*, concerning the *body of Moses*, cannot be explained; all we know about it from the Old Testament is, that the body of Moses was not buried by men, neither was the place of his burial ever known; *see Deut. chap. xxxiv. ver. 6.* Neither Cain, Balaam, or Korah kept
the

the way of the Lord. Observe, *ver. 12, 13*, to what the wicked are compared, and the punishment they will bring upon themselves. We learn, *ver. 14*, that Enoch who was translated to heaven because he *walked with God*, was a prophet and a preacher of righteousness. Observe *ver. 15*, that his prophecy respecting the godly and the wicked, is like the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, which shows that true religion was the same in substance in the beginning of the world as it is now, though differing in outward observances, and *ver. 16* shows that the crimes of the wicked in former ages were of the same nature as in the Apostles days. *Ver. 17, 18*. St Jude refers here to a prophecy of St. Peter, *see 2 Peter chap. iii. ver. 2*. *Ver. 21*. Observe that the Apostle admonishes those to whom he wrote, to *keep themselves* in the love of God, which shows that the saints are not *so kept* by the power of God but that something is to be done on their part, to preserve the divine favour; and also that those who are in a state of grace may depart from it and lose the love of God. *Ver. 22, 23*. These verses show that a difference should be made by the governors of the Church, betwixt such as deserve compassion on account of their ignorance and infirmities, and those who wilfully pervert the pure doctrine. Observe the excellent Doxology at the end of this Epistle.

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

THIS Book is called the *Apocalypse* or *Revelation*, because it contains what our Lord Jesus Christ revealed from heaven to St. John his beloved Apostle, after his ascension to the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and learned men who have made this Revelation their particular study have discovered, by comparing the history of the former ages of the Christian Church with the revolutions and events which have taken place in the nations of the world, that this book contains a *prophetic history of the Church* from the time the Revelation was made, to the end of the world; but it requires more knowledge of history than persons of little leisure can acquire, to understand what has been written by the learned on this subject; at the same time the unlearned Christian must

must not regard the *Revelation* of St. John as a sealed book, which it would be presumptuous for such persons to look into, for there is much in it which may be understood by every person of common understanding who comes to it with an humble mind, desiring to be instructed as far as concerns their own salvation, respecting things that our Lord said would be brought to pass in his Church *before*, and *after* his *second Advent*.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1 to 12. Observe that this Revelation came from our Lord Jesus Christ. The things to which it related *began* to come to pass soon after it was made, and have been fulfilling in a wonderful manner ever since, and are at this time fulfilling very remarkably; so as to give reason to think that the time of our Lord's second Advent is not far distant, when he will come in the clouds with his holy angels. *Ver. 3.* The Churches in Asia are named *ver. 11.* Observe, *ver. 5,* what is said of our Saviour, and *ver. 6,* what honourable titles are bestowed upon the faithful servants of God. *Ver. 7* relates to our Lord's second coming. I am Alpha and Omega, signify that Christ was before all worlds, and that he will continue to be for ever, the same he was from the beginning, the Lord Almighty. *Ver. 9.* The Apostle here addresses the persecuted Christians. He had been banished to Patmos by the cruel emperor Domitian, for preaching the Gospel. *Ver. 10.* *In the spirit*, means in a state of *divine inspiration*. The *Lord's-day* means the christian sabbath, the day on which Christ ascended into heaven, which has taken place of the Jewish sabbath. *Ver. 11.* Observe the purpose for which St. John was inspired, and the name of the Churches to which he was to write in particular,

Ver. 12 to 19. Observe here how glorious the vision of our Lord Jesus Christ was at this time, and how different from his humble appearance upon earth as the son of the *Virgin Mary*, yet St. John knew him (perhaps from having seen him at his transfiguration,) to be the same Lord whom he had loved and followed upon earth; compare this passage with *Exod. chap. xxiv. ver. 9, &c. Ezekiel, chap. i. ver. 26. Daniel, chap. vii. ver. 13,* and *chap. x. ver. 5 and 6,* and you will perceive that Jesus Christ was the Lord God who

appeared to Moses, and was seen in visions by the ancient prophets. The *sword proceeding from his mouth*, signified that his word is powerful and piercing. *Ver. 19, 20.* These verses explain what was meant by the *golden candlesticks* and *seven stars*. By the *angels* of the Churches are understood the ministers who were at the head of those Churches, as our bishops are at present over their respective dioceses. Observe, *ver. 18*, what the Lord Jesus said of his own everlasting life and his power,

This chapter should lead us to think of our Saviour with the greatest reverence, to look up to him with a lively faith, and to rejoice that he who laid down his life for mankind, has the power to admit his faithful servants into heaven, and that hell is under his controul, so that the *devil* can do no injury to those whom the Saviour protects. We should also learn to consider the presiding ministers of the Christian Churches in the most honourable light.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter and the following one contain what may be considered as *Epistles* dictated by the Lord himself, and written down by St. John.

Ver. 1 to 8. The first letter is to the bishop of the Church of *Ephesus*. *Ver. 2, 3.* Observe for what that Church is commended, and *ver. 4*, what is threatened on account of its love and zeal not being so great as at the first establishment of it. *Ver. 5.* *Removing the candlestick*, meant, that it should no longer be a visible Church. *Ver. 6.* The *Nicq-laitans* were *hereticks*, who taught that certain lewd and idolatrous practices forbidden by the Apostles, were lawful for Christians. *Ver. 7.* Observe what is promised to those who overcome the temptations of the world.

We may perceive from these verses, that the zeal and patience of Christians will be finally rewarded, which should lead us to labour as the Scripture teaches us, to *keep the faith*; and prevent our listening to those who would unsettle our minds from the Church we belong to, which is certainly a *true Church*; and one great sign of its being so, is, its having three orders of ministers over the different branches of it as the first churches had, *viz. Bishops, Priests, or Presbyters, and Deacons.*

Ver. 8 to 12. The *first* and the *last*, *ver. 1.* meant the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, *ver. 9*, the high character of the church at Smyrna. *Thou art rich*, meant rich in spiritual blessings. Of the *synagogue of Satan*, signified, followers of the devil. *Ver. 10* was a prophecy. *Days*, in prophetic language, signify *years*. It is supposed to have been fulfilled by the *ten years* persecution of the Christians, under the Roman Emperor Domitian. *Ver. 10, 11.* Observe the reward promised to the faithful. The *second death* means everlasting misery in hell.

Ver. 12 to 18. *Ver. 13.* *Satan's seat* meant the place where the devil had gained dominion over the people who lived in it. *Antipas* is supposed to have been a private Christian, who suffered martyrdom. *Ver. 14, 15*, show that the *Nicolaitans* endeavoured to seduce the Christian churches into the same doctrine by which Balaam had seduced the Israelites. *Ver. 16.* The *sword of my mouth* signified a dreadful sentence. *Ver. 17.* *Hidden manna*, and a *white stone*, meant spiritual blessings. A *new name* signifies one by which the righteous will be distinguished in heaven.

Ver. 18 to the end. By that woman, *Jezabel*, *ver. 20*, is understood the sect of the Nicolaitans. *Ver. 21.* *Her fornication* means false doctrine. *Ver. 22, 23*, the Lord threatens to send judgments upon the sect that taught it. *Ver. 24, 25.* *No other burden* means no other commands. *Ver. 26 to the end* is supposed to relate to the final triumph of Christ over his enemies at the last day.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1 to 7. This letter to the church of Sardis is very suitable to the church of our own nation at the present time; and every member of it will do well to lay it to heart, both the *threatenings* and the *glorious promises* of the Lord, that they may so *behave* and *live* as to be reckoned at the coming of our Lord among those who have *not defiled their garments*, that is, those who have kept a pure faith, and maintained good works.

Ver. 7 to 14. Observe the high character here given of the church at Philadelphia, the commendations bestowed, and the promises made to those members who should patiently endure temptation

temptation and persecution, which will doubtless be extended to all at the *last day*; who shall be found to have done the same things. Observe, *ver. 12*, that such persons will be admitted into the *heavenly Jerusalem*.

Ver. 14 to the end. Observe, *ver. 15*, how severely the church of the Laodiceans is censured and reproved for being *lukewarm*, or *indifferent*, in respect to religion, which applies very forcibly to many of the members of our own church. Observe, *ver. 16*, that our Lord speaks of such persons as totally unworthy to be reckoned of his church. *Ver. 17.* By those who *say they are rich*, when they are, in fact, *poor and naked*, are understood those who think they have wisdom and virtue enough of their own to save them, without troubling themselves with the doctrines of faith, or the precepts of the Gospel; without which, however, they are in a spiritual sense *blind and naked*. *Ver. 18.* By the things which in this verse such persons are required to *buy*, we understand the treasures of heaven, the purity of the saints, and the knowledge of the Gospel. Observe *ver. 20, 21*, the Lord's gracious promises.

It is to be remarked that in each of these letters to the church Christ speaks of himself under different titles, each of which is suitable only to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; and each of them ends with the same injunction, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" This warning shows the importance not only of what St. John wrote to the seven churches of Asia, but of all the writings of the New Testament, because they were all designed for the instruction and edification of the *universal church*, of which every church is a part. But we must be careful to understand rightly what is meant by a Church, namely, a society of Christians agreeing in all the Ordinances and Doctrines of Christ, and the Apostles; having a lawful, regular Ministry of God's appointing. The Church of England is such a Church; its divine Ordinances, the two *Sacraments of Baptism*, and the *Lord's Supper*, were ordained by Christ himself; its *Creds* contain all the articles of the Christian faith, as taught by Christ and his Apostles; and it has three orders of Ministers, namely, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, derived from the first three orders of ministers in the primitive

primitive church, who were called Apostles, Elders, (or Presbyters), and Deacons. To remain steadfastly attached to this Church is to put ourselves under the immediate protection of Christ—to depart from it is *schism*. Whoever reads what Christ and the Holy Spirit says to the seven churches of Asia will surely take warning neither to *depart from the Church*, to be *lukewarm* members of it, nor to *corrupt it by false doctrine or wicked practices*.

CHAPTER IV.

What is related in this chapter was a glorious vision, in which was represented to the mind of the Apostle, by significant figures, *spiritual and heavenly things*. *Ver. 1.* The Apostle was carried in thought up to heaven in order to be informed of things which were to take place respecting the church of Christ. *Ver. 2.* He saw not these things with his eyes, but they were revealed to his mind by the Holy Spirit. *Ver. 3, 4.* He beheld in thought the throne of God, and the Lord sitting upon it, as represented in visions to the **ancient** prophets; see *Isaiah, chap. vi. ver. 1. Jer. xvii. ver. 12. Ezek. i. ver. 26 and x. ver. 1.* *Ver. 4.* The elders were emblems of the church of Christ. *Ver. 6 to 9.* The *four beasts full of eyes*, were figurative representations of the nature of angels, who excel in wisdom, strength, courage, and swiftness. *Ver. 8.* Observe in what words they offer up their adorations, and that they are never weary of their heavenly employment, but delight in offering up praise and adoration to the Lord God Almighty. *Ver. 10.* The elders, that is, the church, are here described as following the example of the angels. Observe that the words used by the angels, *ver. 8*, and the worship of the elders, *ver. 10, 11*, are such as pious Christians may use and perform; and while they do so they are in some degree partakers of heavenly enjoyment.

CHAPTER V.

It is not easy to determine what is the exact meaning of the visions in this and the following chapters, but it may be supposed that *the book with seven seals* was the book of prophecy,

phesy, relating to the church and kingdom of Christ, which the prophet Daniel, in his last vision, was commanded by the angel to *seal until the time of the end*; see *Dan. chap. xii. ver. 9.* *Ver. 5.* Observe that none but the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, was worthy to reveal these hidden things; that he took upon himself to do so; and he alone is able to bring to pass what he foretold to his beloved Apostle.

Observe, *ver. 8*, that the Lamb of God, the REDEEMER, is here represented as worshipped by the angels and the church. *Ver. 9, 10.* Take notice of these words. Observe also the very great numbers of the inhabitants of heaven. *Ver. 12.* This sublime passage of Scripture is often sung in our churches as an anthem; and if performed with true devotion, it very properly makes a part of divine service. But let performers and singers reflect what they are about, and not presume to play or sing the *Hymn of Angels* in a light and thoughtless manner, merely for the amusement of the congregation, or for the display of their musical talents; for this is a great profanation.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 4 to 12. The design of this vision was to comfort the faithful under persecution, and to teach Christians not to think it strange if God suffered his saints to be persecuted, and their blood to be shed without immediately taking vengeance on their persecutors; that God dealt thus with them for wise and just reasons; and that he would not fail to avenge them when the number of their brethren should be accomplished; and that in the mean time the souls of his saints are preserved after death, and enjoy rest in expectation of their final deliverance and of the glory prepared for them.

Ver. 12 to the end. We have in these verses an emblem of the *end of the world*, and of the *last judgment*; in which we should particularly observe the lively description of the terror and despair with which those who persecute the faithful, and all the other enemies of God will be seized at the *last day*. This description should be often present to our minds, that it may keep up in us a religious awe, which will be of great use to direct us to avoid that terrible condemnation and
despair

despair which will at that great day be the portion of the wicked in general.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter represents the increase of the Christian church which was to follow the opening of the seals. *Ver. 1* signified that there would be for a certain time a peaceable state of things.

Ver. 2 to 9. These verses signified that many of the Jewish nation would be converted to Christianity.

Ver. 9 to 13. These verses describe the blessed fruits of the Gospel in all the different nations of the earth. The *white robes* signify the *righteousness* of the saints; the *palms in their hands*, the *victory* gained over their enemies. Observe, that *kindreds* are mentioned, which gives reason to hope that good people who were related on earth will meet and enjoy each other's society in heaven. Observe also, that all this *great multitude* will join together in ascribing their salvation to the *mercy of God*, and the *sacrifice of their Redeemer*. *Ver. 12.* *Amen* signifies, let worship and praise be offered by all creatures to the Almighty Lord.

Ver. 13 to the end. These verses relate to the *martyrs*, those saints who died for the truth of the Gospel. Observe, that *even these* owe the whiteness of their robes, their *righteousness*, not to the shedding of their *own blood*, but to the blood of the *Redeemer*, which was shed for the sins of the *whole world*; but through the grace of God the *martyrs* will receive a rich reward for their sufferings in their exemption from all future wants, pains, and sorrows, and in the particular favour of their blessed Redeemer.

CHAPTERS VIII. IX.

These chapters denounce dreadful plagues and heavy judgments against those nations whom the Almighty foresaw would be the enemies of the church, and shew that neither the most wicked and powerful princes, nor the devil himself, called here *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, can effect their ruinous purposes without the permission of the *Redeemer of mankind*; and that even the mischief which is suffered to

fall upon the good is turned into blessings to them by the rewards bestowed for their faith and patience.

Learned authors trace the fulfilment of these prophecies and those which follow, in the history of the nations of the earth, compared with the history of the church, and apply them chiefly to the church of Rome, which was a corruption of the true church; but it requires great leisure and study to understand these things, and it is not necessary for those who have but little time to employ themselves with such difficult subjects.

CHAPTER X.

Observe in this chapter the description of the *angel*, and the *oath which he sware*, from whence we learn that the world, and all things in it, will come to an end at God's appointed time; and that the *mystery of God*, or all the things which have been foretold by the prophets in a mysterious manner, will be accomplished and fully declared, so that they will be perfectly understood.

CHAPTER XI.

From this chapter we learn that all the kingdoms of the earth will become the kingdom of Christ, that he will rule over them, and they will obey his laws; and that the saints will finally be rewarded by admission into heaven, and the wicked finally consigned with the devil to the bottomless pit.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1 to 10. In these verses the *devil*, called the *dragon* and the *serpent*, is represented as the enemy of the church, which is described under the emblem of a *woman*. Observe, *ver. 7, 8*, that Satan was originally an *angel of light*, but that he was cast out of heaven for rebelling against God.

Ver. 10 to 11. These verses signify that Christ will finally overcome the devil, and that all the saints and martyrs will, *through the blood of the Redeemer*, obtain a victory over their
great

great spiritual enemy, and that in the mean time the church will be preserved, notwithstanding all the persecutions to which the faithful members of it will be exposed.

CHAPTER XIII.

This is a very difficult chapter to explain, and it will be best to pass it over.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1 to 6. These verses set before us the joy and happiness of those who shall be found at our Lord's second coming to have been faithful to him, and to have kept themselves pure from the corruptions of the world.

Ver. 6 to 13. We learn from these verses that the time will come when the *spiritual Babylon* shall be destroyed, and that all the enemies of the church, and the wicked in general, will be condemned to everlasting torment.

Ver. 13. Observe in these verses that the Spirit of God declares that those who *die in the Lord*, that is, in the faith and profession of Christianity, after a life of obedience to the laws of the Gospel, are *blessed*; that they *rest from their labours*, and that their *works do follow them*: by which is meant that their happiness begins from the time of their death in a state of rest and peace, and that they immediately receive in part the reward of their works in the other world. These assurances from the Holy Spirit, of the happy state of the good after death, are very comfortable, and should excite us to a holy life, that we may be partakers of the rest and happiness provided for the faithful.

CHAPTERS XV. XVI.

These are very mysterious chapters, but without entering into particulars we may understand from them, that *great and terrible judgments* will be poured forth upon the world in the last times before the second coming of our Saviour, particularly upon the Papal Power, that is, the church of Rome; but however dreadful these judgments may be, the faithful servants of the Lord will be finally victorious over their spiritual enemies.

CHAPTER XVII.

This chapter is understood to relate to the *church of Rome*, by whom many kings and nations of the earth have been se-

duced from the pure worship of the Gospel into *idolatry* and *superstition*, under the name of Christianity; and have been led to persecute the *true church*, and to shed the blood of many saints and martyrs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter foretels the fall of *mystic Babylon*, meaning, as is supposed, *papal Rome*; and the joy of the faithful in its destruction.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. I to 10. This chapter foretels the triumph of the righteous after the destruction of *mystic Babylon*, and their joy at the *marriage of the Lamb*, by which is to be understood the coming of Christ to take to *himself*, that is, into his heavenly kingdom, all those who have been faithful to him upon the earth.

Ver. 10. This verse plainly teaches that it is a sin to worship *saints* and *angels*.

Ver. 11 to the end. We have here an awful description of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at the day of judgment to take vengeance upon the devil and all the wicked.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. I to 11. In these verses we have a very remarkable prophecy that Satan shall be bound for the space of a thousand years, and that during that period our Lord will reign in a glorious manner with the saints and martyrs; and that at the beginning of this thousand years there will be a resurrection of the *just*; see *I Corinthians, chap. xv. ver. 23, 24.*

Ver. 11 to the end. We have here another prophecy concerning the *day of judgment*, and the *general resurrection* which are to take place at the end of the thousand years; at which time, we find, that the wicked will be cast into a *lake of fire*, there to remain for ever with the *devil and his angels*, and then *death* will be put an end to, for the righteous will have *eternal life in heaven*, and the wicked will exist *eternally in hell*.

These great truths ought to be always present to our minds, and engage us to pray, and to labour continually to improve in piety, so that at the day which will be so dreadful to the wicked we may appear before our Lord with joy and holy confidence, and that our *names may be found in the Book of Life*.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1 to 9. The *holy city*, the *New Jerusalem*, *ver. 2*, is the heavenly habitation prepared by God before the foundation of the world for his faithful servants; see *Hebrews*, *chap. xi. ver. 10. xii. ver. 22, 23*. Observe the *promises* in the following verses which will be faithfully fulfilled, for they are those of the Redeemer himself. Observe, *ver. 8*, the *threatenings* to the wicked which will be certainly executed. By the *fearful*, we may understand those who fear *men* rather than *God*; by the *unbelieving*, those who do not believe what God has revealed. *Sorcerers* signify persons who pretend to have dealings with evil spirits. *Idolaters* are those who pay to *creatures* the honour due to the *Creator*. By *liars* are meant not only those that *speaking* falsehoods, but those who deceive by their *actions*. Observe the fate that awaits all such, and that the *second death* will not be putting an end to the existence of the wicked, but the delivering them up to *never ending torments*.

Ver. 9 to 27. These verses convey as lively an idea of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, inhabited by the saints, as human language can give to mortals; but when we shall behold in reality this glorious place, we shall find it far exceeding all that we can possibly conceive of it with our present faculties. *Ver. 27.* Observe that nothing unclean, none who practise abominations, or falsehoods of any kind, will be suffered to enter it, none but those who are written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*: who these are we may judge from the foregoing verses, namely, the *pure*, the *pious*, the *humble*, and the *holy*, those whose characters are the direct contrary of those who, as the eighth verse informs us, will be *shut out of it*.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1 to 8. This is a continued description of the *New Jerusalem*. What are particularly meant by the *water of life* and the *tree of life*, cannot be known by us at present; but we may conceive that they signify *great spiritual and everlasting blessings*, which will be enjoyed in the immediate presence of God. The *angel* who presented this glorious vision to the Apostle was, as we read, *chap. xxi. ver. 9*, one of those who *poured out the vials of the divine wrath*. *Ver. 7* seems to be a message sent by the angel from the Redeemer to his church on earth. To *keep the sayings of this book* signify, to observe them so as to believe that what is promised and threatened

threatened in it will surely be performed; and the Lord's declaration, *Behold, I come quickly*, was soon verified, for the prophecies of this book began immediately to be fulfilled. Satan, before it was written, had in some degree corrupted the Christian church, as we may learn from the letters addressed in the beginning of the Revelation to the seven churches, and from that time he has been constantly endeavouring to establish a kingdom for himself, by the ruin of the heavenly kingdom; but though the Devil has been permitted to afflict the servants of God for the trial of their faith and the exercise of their virtues, he has never been suffered to hurt their eternal interests. Satan is still busily at work to accomplish his wicked purpose, most remarkably so indeed at this present time; but we may be certain he will be finally defeated, and that the church of God, through the powerful protection of the Saviour, will prove triumphant at the last.

Ver. 8 to 10. Observe here, that the angel refused to be worshipped, and his words show that it is idolatry to worship any creature, however excellent and exalted.

Ver. 10 to 12. *Seal not the sayings*, signified that the Revelation was not to be laid aside for a time like the last prophecies of Daniel, because the prophecies of this book were to begin to be accomplished immediately, and to continue fulfilling to the end of the world. *Ver. 11* signifies that no further changes will happen in respect to the condition of mankind after the *last things* foretold in this book are accomplished, namely, the reward of the faithful and the judgment of the wicked at the *last day*.

Ver. 12, 13. These verses are part of the message of the Lord by the angel.

Ver. 14, 15, appear to be the angel's own words.

Ver. 16 to the end. These verses contain the conclusion of our Lord's message, and a pious exclamation of the Apostle's, which every devout soul should be ready to join in, for all our highest and dearest hopes depend upon the *blessed and glorious day of the appearance of our divine Lord and Saviour*, for whose grace we should constantly pray to keep us in the way of *everlasting life* unto the end of our mortal state.

THE END.



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